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A PANEL FROM AJANTA

HINDOO ARV IN IVS SOCIAL SEVVING



BY

PERVIZ N. PEEROZSHAW

DUBASH, M. A., LL. B.

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To

My Father

Noshirwan Peeroshaw Dubash

Solicitor (*High Court Bombay*)

HINDOO ART IN ITS SOCIAL SETTING

being a dissertation on

ART IN THE ANCIENT INDIAN CIVILISATION

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Benoy K. Deomesh Law Public...

FOREWORD

BY

SIR S. RADHAKRISHNAN, Kt., D. Litt., (London)

(VICE CHANCELLOR, ANDHRA UNIVERSITY)

DRAWINGS IN BLACK AND WHITE

BY

Miss RUBY J. TREASURYVALA

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FOREWORD

The greatness of a country is not a material thing but a moral and spiritual quality. We appreciate it through a study of the national literature and art. These represent the highest point of the nation's consciousness, its greatest powers and most delicate sensibility.

The art of a nation derives its inspiration from the people's life and in turn quickens it. If we set aside the artistic works of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa, Indian art appears about the third century B. C. spreading over a vast continent and a space of over centuries. Indian art has developed different aspects; yet to the eye which tries to see it as a whole, possesses not only an undeniable continuity but a certain unity. It is the task of the art critics to interpret the aesthetic effort of our country.

The works of Vincent Smith and Ananda Coomaraswamy, Havell, and Codrington, give us not only an account of the fine Arts In India but also the inner meaning of the art. Fergusson and Cunningham on Architecture, Griffiths and Lady Herringham on Painting, Havell on Sculpture, Fox-Strangeways on Music, Coomaraswamy on the meaning of all art have contributed a good deal to the interpretation which cannot but make Indian Art better understood and appreciated. But none of these great writers have quite attempted a correlation of the growth of art with the growth of the Indian Society, the evolution of an artistic conception of beauty with the development of the religion and philosophy, science and literature, in the country as a whole. Miss Dubash has attempted this task in a Thesis for the M.A. Degree of the Bombay University. On account of her lack of any first hand acquaintance with the original sources from which the data for her work are obtained, she has had to be content with English translations. She had other difficulties in the matter of procuring illustrations, which are essential for her work of this nature. She admits her inability to attempt anything like a critical or technical judgment on the subject she reviews; and the scope of a work, necessarily confined to a limited range provided by the Ancient Period of Indian History, would not permit her to indulge in a connected historical outline, which would reveal the central principles of India's aesthetic effort.

Yet withal, Miss Dubash has attempted a difficult task with courage and understanding. She seems to have studied carefully the works of the masters who have already laboured in the field. Her Chapters on

the Ideals and Motive forces apparently owe a great deal to the authorities she so freely quotes, yet her interpretation of the bearing of social institutions on the growth of the arts in India seems to be her distinctive contribution.

The Chapters reviewing the several Arts she selects for detailed illustration and explaining the place of these Arts in the everyday life of Ancient India and her people, must call forth warm commendation from every student of Indian civilisation, and of Indian society. Miss Dubash infects her readers with her own enthusiasm for the subject and her work is bound to prove interesting even to the expert.

S. Radhakrishnan.
December, 1934.

PREFACE

If ever a Title was ill-begotten for any work, I must confess it is this one. The only reason for keeping it, is, that I cannot think of a better.

Its main fault is that it may appear too ambitious; or might lead the unwary reader to expect far more than is contained in this effort. For instance, a glance at the Title might make him think that this is a work principally on Art, designed to reveal the worth and potentialities of Indian Art. I must hasten to dispel any such misconception of my work, and discourage any such expectations doomed to disappointment.

I have set myself no such ambitious task, being unqualified even to attempt it. Perhaps a few words on how this work came into existence would give the reader a better idea of its scope and purpose than the Title.

It was really the Revivalist School of Painting in Bengal that formed the portal, which, disclosed the treasures of Indian art to my eager eyes. For a long time, I had admired those paintings,—so different from anything I had seen before. Their inspiration seemed different, and the style of representation unique. The almond eyes, the sweeping lines and curves, the softness and harmony of colour, the restraint and refinement of expression, whatever the theme or sentiment, awakened immediate response each time I saw those paintings. They gave me a new insight into the meaning and spirit of the things they represented, which was never understood before. For instance, I had always abhorred the institution of *Sati* and was never able to realise its spirituality or deeper significance. I had, indeed, admired the courage of the *Sati*, and stood awed at the sacrifice of *Johur*, as Rajput history and tradition reveal them; but, even so, I could scarcely sympathise with the sheer waste of life of such purposeful women that these institutions involved. Yet, a single painting of this School, however, revealed to me the true meaning of the *Sati*, within the brief span of a few seconds. When I beheld for the first time that wonderful poetic representation of Nandlal Bose's idealisation of *Sati*, I realised the spiritual depth that had conceived this idea in its prime, and made it that supreme act of renunciation, that sovereign symbol of a soul's despair, which no logic can explain, but which, once revealed, no sophistry can disprove, no prejudice disfigure, no mockery or debasement in actual practice utterly deface.

Whence did these artists learn to paint so truly the invisible things of the spirit? How do they manage to convey the inaudible message of the soul? For answer to these haunting queries, I turned up a few works on Art but they provided no key to the mystery. My knowledge of India, its history and civilisation, its art and culture, was so disgracefully poor, that it did not so much

as strike me where to seek this answer. For me, in those days, Indian Art had no history beyond the remains of Mughal architecture. While I knew that Chimabue was the *first* of the Renaissance and Giotto its *founder* I was blind to the marvels of Ajanta, Ellora and Borobudur. The blindness was not of my choice, but the inevitable result of our present-day system of education, which seeks to teach us to look for all culture, Art, and heroism away from the shores of India.

But to go back to the Bengali Painters, and the whole School that has risen from their efforts. I was unable to make any headway as to the source and nature of their inspiration, until another unexpected incident came to my help.

Mr. Faizee Rahamin, a well-known connoisseur of Indian Art, and himself an artist was invited by our Literary Society to lecture on some aspect of ancient Indian Art. He chose Ajanta, and illustrated his Lecture with slides,—coloured reproductions from Ajanta itself, that flashed the past in vivid colours before our dazzled eyes. This Lecture, and particularly the Slides, set my imagination aflame with visions of the Beauty that must have been. Thence came the inspiration for my work; thence the fount into which the Bengali Painters dipped their brushes before they traced those eloquent lines, and clothed those graceful forms they have recreated.

How intense, how powerful, how all-pervading this ancient inspiration must have been to live till this day, and rekindle the torch that had laid smothered for so many centuries, at a spark from the vitalising fire! The thought was bewildering, because I had not, at first, the time to pursue it to its logical end. But the opportunity came after my graduation, when the trammels of prescribed curricula held me no longer. I decided to labour in this field and started research. Luckily, I met with a few good professors, one of whom readily grasped my desire, and gave coherence and shape to my disjointed ideas and indefinite gropings, by suggesting the sphere in which I should work.

The sub-title indicates this sphere more accurately. After having laboured for a year, I discovered that the sphere chosen originally was too vast for the time allowed. Within two years, I could tackle but a fraction of the subject I had once thought of dealing with, within the dimensions of this Thesis. Hence the present work.

It begins with a study of the inspiration that made Indian Art and Culture, because its mystery had baffled the one the longest. I found this inspiration to be, in its essence, religious, tempered by the native genius of the people, and seasoned by their environment, both geographical and social as well as psychological. Next, the study proceeds to examine how this inspiration permeated the life and art of the people, and the channels through which it worked. As the study advances, it discloses the strength and volume of this force, a living fire that illumined every phase of existence in those bygone days.

It has smouldered through centuries of neglect and repression to this very day, colouring our life, even today and furnishing the vitalising spark to our artistic effort. And now that a new life seems to be breathed into our people, it blazes forth afresh, revealing to our dazed eyes, not only a better knowledge of ourselves, our heritage and makeup, but also the potentialities of the owners of that treasure of the past, which ages of veiled mockery had, hidden from us.

To explain this better, we had to survey the ancient Indian people, the ideals which inspired them; their cultural heritage and contribution; their mode of life and mould of thought; the institutions that formed this life and regulated this thought; the manner in which the original inspiration manifested itself in there Art; and how Art itself reacted upon these ideals, making it possible to realise them in daily life,—these are the different facets of the subject treated of in this Thesis.

As Sir Radhakrishnan has so aptly pointed out in the Foreword, the greatness of a country is a spiritual quality. We appreciate it through a study of its Art and Literature; for these represent the highest point of a nation's consciousness, its greatest power, and most delicate sensibility. The Art of a people derives its inspiration from the people's life, and, in turn, quickens it. Hence it is to a people's Art, that we turn to fathom its inspiration. It is in this way that we discover the place of Art in the civilisation of Ancient India; or are able to view Hindu Art in its Social Setting.

It must be clear by now to the reader what the purpose of this work is. To me, it come as a Revelation,—I mean, not the work itself, but the study and the thought that have gone to its making. There is no attempt in it at anything original, in the sense of a new discovery. Neither the standard of the Examination for which the present work is a Thesis require it, nor would the attainments of the present writer permit her to break new ground. All that I have said in this work may have been said before, and perhaps better. Yet no one, so far as I am aware, has represented the aspect I have attempted to examine and emphasise in one place, with a definite viewpoint, and a given objective.

That the Indians are an Art-loving people is amply testified to by the remains of their artistic heritage. I have sought to explain why this is so, by searching into the recesses and corners of the soul of this people from its remote history. I found that Art to them meant Beauty; Beauty, a revelation of the Divine. The search for Beauty was thus a seeking after Reality behind Illusion, the Unity behind diversity, the Spirit behind the matter. Art played an important part in the self-realisation of our people. It provided a medium of self-expression for the Artist, a mode of enjoyment for the cultured and the courtly; a ritual for worship; an instrument for the propaganda of the faith; an accomplishment for the rich, and an occupation for the poor; a

companion for the average woman, and a weapon for the Courtesan, by a touch of which she softened and mellowed,—the mean and the sordid.

Given such an important role in the life of a whole people, Art could not but colour,—and be itself influenced, at the same time by,—the social and political institutions, in ancient India. The Thesis has, therefore, to consider, not only the basic ideals of the Indian Civilisation; but also the principal Institutions in which those Ideals were embodied; and the artistic manifestations in which they have come down to this day. A review of the nature, canons, and purport of Art generally, and some specified Arts, like Architecture, Sculpture, Music, Dancing, Drama and the Literary Arts, followed by the concrete examples of the place these Arts occupied in daily life, completes the task set herself by the writer.

A few words on the writer's personal limitations to attempt a work of this description would not be amiss. In the first place, I am unaquainted with Sanskrit,—the classic vehicle and storehouse of the ancient Indian lore, and original material for this Thesis. Translations are rare, often inaccessible, and frequently, inadequate to convey the true meaning and the real purpose of the original aphoristic treatise in classic Sanskrit. Besides, Sanskrit is a difficult language to translate, hence, such translations as are available always leave one with the doubt whether they truly render the real meaning of the works they present in a modern garb.

Original material being thus very scanty and translations not always reliable, the research needed for this work had to be carried on under difficulties of which the average critic has, I fear, very little idea. Add to this the further difficulty, that our Libraries are not well-equipped for this kind of research work. There is no Library in India easily accessible to ordinary research students to compare with the British Museum, where almost any published work could be had for consultation. Our more important bookshops, again, do not possess that sympathy and understanding of a student's handicap in such matters, which would allow them to be liberal in regard to the use of such stock of books as they may possess. Private collectors, or connoisseurs, are either unknown, or inaccessible. The material, therefore, and the facilities with which an ordinary student, like the present writer, has to work, is scanty and scattered, difficult to sift, and hard to put together. The work must, therefore, inevitably suffer from such shortcomings, which, however, are unavoidable.

All these handicaps are multiplied a hundredfold when one comes to the problem of Illustrations. A work like this would lose more than half its value, if it had no appropriate illustrations. These are hard to come by; and, when found there are difficulties in regard to permission or copyright, of which most of us have no conception. The ideal method would, indeed, have been for me to travel to the different centres of acknowledged interest, or authoritative

collection; make one's own photographs, and have them reproduced by way of illustration to the text. When I first started on this work, it was my intention to adopt this method. But I did not take into account the difficulties set in the path of a woman student in our country; particularly social and pecuniary. Hence, there was no alternative but to rely on photographs, or prints, taken by others, for purposes not necessarily identical with those of this work. In the reproduction of photographs and prints, the law and custom regarding copyright causes considerable difficulty, in some cases insurmountable. One searches for weeks, day and night, for just the correct illustration for a given theme; one at last discovers it, and hastens to use it. Suddenly, there rises in one's path the grim spectre of Copyright, forbidding unauthorised use on pain of dire penalties. Government Departments have their own exasperating routine and red-tape, delays and endless formalities in such matters; and individual authors or publishers have their own crochets or their own conditions to make, before the permission is granted to reproduce even a single illustration. Illustration to this work have, accordingly, been collected, under difficulties of which the foregoing are but a faint reflection; and, even then, they are a poor substitute for what I would have liked them to be.

I owe an apology for inflicting this tale of woe upon the reader. But such things have to be pointed out, if only as a matter of self-defence. And the matters dealt with are indispensable for the proper making of such a work as is herein attempted. None can be aware more fully than the writer of the lack of coloured illustrations, for example, to give force and meaning to certain sections of the work dealing with Art in daily life. But, though quite appropriate illustrations are to be found at Ajanta, the present writer was not fortunate enough to obtain the necessary permission to reproduce the same.

The work, I would repeat, has a modest compass, and a limited field. In origin, it is the outcome of the writer's own curiosity regarding some aspects of the Indian civilisation. In fulfillment, the work perhaps breaks no new ground. In its fullness, even, it may not be for finished scholars, who may know all that is said here, and much more. My work is not for them. It is rather for those humbler seekers after knowledge, to whom perhaps, some that is herein given may be a revelation; and much more a new, definite, distinct vision and appreciation of what is already vaguely familiar. It is the outcome of constant labour of two-and-a-half years; and if it inspires or induces other similar students of India's magnificent past to labour further in the same vineyard, I would consider all the labour bestowed, the disappointments and difficulties borne in preparing this work, rewarded.

Lest any new venturer be led to expect none other than a path full of obstacles only for a novice in the field, let me now hasten to unfold the silver lining.

My depth of gratitude to my teachers, guides and friends who by their

labour, advice and assistance helped to make many a tedious and desperate moment surmountable, can scarcely be expressed.

As far as the actual working out of the theme is concerned my deepest obligations and sincerest gratitude are due to a friend who prefers to be unmentioned. To him I owe more than I can ever hope to repay. Through every stage of this work his learned discussions, helpful suggestions have been invaluable; and I am grateful to fate or destiny whichever guides our stars, for this rare privilege, which would be the envy of many, for having such an inexhaustible source of inspiration, knowledge and sympathy to assist me.

Of my teachers and guides, I must mention the cordial sympathy of Dr. G. S. Ghurye, Professor of Sociology at the school of Economics and Sociology, under whom this work was carried on. It would be impertinent for a student of his to speak of his deep and inspired understanding of our ancient heritage. But it would be a statement of fact to record that without his ready help and learned suggestions, the work would have baffled me. To Professor Altekar of the Benares University, who examined my work for the M. A. degree, I am beholden for many useful suggestions and alterations.

Sir S. Radhakrishnan, whose name makes the heart of every Indian glow with pride, has honoured me by writing the foreword for this work. For this favour, I am indeed very grateful.

It does not happen often, that after reading a man's work, the reader feels like doing homage at his feet. Such is the effect Dr. Coomaraswami's writings produce. His penetrating insight, and marvellous expositions of Indian Art and Culture set the imagination aflame. He reveals the soul of India, a rare find for those who live in modern soulless India. I have not had the pleasure of knowing Dr. Coomaraswami yet, but I live in the hope that some day in the near future I personally may be able to thank him, particularly for a special favour he has done me by permitting me to use some illustrations from his works, which are duly acknowledged in their places.

Though I have a grievance against the Archaeological Department of Hyderabad for not allowing me to use any of their coloured prints from Ajanta and Ellora, I have still to thank them for their courtesy in allowing me to use several half-tone prints which are duly acknowledged.

My especial thanks are due to Sir Akbar Hydari who very kindly consented to my using the coloured prints of any three of his pictures from his Ajanta series at the Prince of Wales Museum. I could not take advantage of this offer because of the expense of copying involved, and have had to content myself by producing these in half-tone.

It was in desperation that I ultimately settled down to the idea that my book was to have no coloured illustration. Just then fate smiled. Through the exertion and effort of Mr. Burjor Treasuriwala, well-known to all lovers of art in Bombay, I met Mr. Kallianjee Curumsey Damji who very readily with

genuine sympathy for the furtherance, of culture lent me two of his Ajanta paintings copied from the caves by Mukul Dey, which the reader will see duly acknowledged in the following pages. Indeed, my debt to him is great, for the solution he so kindly offered.

The Archaeological Departments of Gwalior and Pudukkottai readily co-operated with my request and supplied me with all the available material they had, for which I am grateful. If the other Archaeological departments worked with such promptness, they would save a student's labour considerably, particularly the Archaeological Survey of India. But, despite that, it is to this last mentioned department that I owe my thanks for the largest number of illustrations used, which are acknowledged in their proper places.

To the curators and staff of the Department of Archaeology and Art at the Prince of Wales Museum my next thanks are due, for all the conveniences given to me for photographing some of the exhibits, and, for some of the prints used.

Miss Ruby J. Treasuryvala is responsible for all the little drawings in black and white which adorn the binding, section-heads and chapter-heads. She is an amateur, and readily agreed to assist me. Her native talent is too obvious to need any comment; but what I prize most is her genuine and ungrudging desire to help me, and the pains she has taken, for which I can hardly thank her enough.

In preparing the Mss. for the press, in correcting the proofs, in compiling the index and bibliography, and other host of details that relieve the routine and monotony of a task, I have many helpers to thank, especially Mr. Dinshaw D. Dubash, Miss Freny Nicholson and Mr. Dhun R. Sanjana. I should like to mention Mr. U. J. Joshi who prepared the index, and Messrs. Koparde & Patell, who did all my photographic work for me.

The Author acknowledges her indebtedness to the University of Bombay for the substantial financial help it has granted towards the cost of the publication of this book.

Perviz N. Dubash
(1936.)

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PART I

INTRODUCTORY





CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF SUBJECT

The place of Art in the civilisation of Ancient and Medieval India, is a subject which has so far received no systematic or exhaustive treatment. Scattered studies or monographs are found on the several different aspects of the subject; but as they are not co-related, they whet without satisfying the curiosity of the reader. From writings like those of Dr. Coomaraswamy, Mr. Havell, Sir J. Marshall, Mr. V. A. Smith, Fergusson, Keith and many others who have devoted themselves to the study of Indian Art and culture, one is able to collect a great deal of useful information on the several branches of the subject. But a comprehensive and systematised idea of the place of Art in the Indian Civilisation, as aimed at in this title, cannot be obtained from their works. Each addressing itself to a different point of view, and none devoted specifically to the place of Art in the social scheme as a whole, these works tend to obscure, rather than elucidate, the real relation between Art and Society. Hence this work, attempting to determine the place of Art in the civilisation of Ancient India.

Art a part of all Civilisation.

That Art has an important place in almost every civilisation worth the name is not a proposition that we need discuss here.

> "It is almost needless to say that Art and religion are two of the most potent factors of human life"[1]

says M. Anesaki; and it would not do for any civilisation to neglect one of the most potent factors of human life. Assuming the importance of Art as a whole in any civilisation, we propose, in this chapter to explain all the terms used in the title, and so limit clearly the nature and scope of the work.

[1] *Buddhist Art in Relation to its Ideals*, p. 1.

Origin, Nature and Development of Civilisation.

The term civilisation broadly may well be defined as that process which transforms the primitive savage hardly different from his cousin the ape, into a cultured, developed, disciplined, human being, living and co-working with his fellows for an ever-extending control and dominion over the brute forces around him. As applied to a people, it means the story of their intellectual and material advancement. The term has two aspects, the static and the dynamic. Its dynamic aspect is best expressed by what may be termed the process of humanisation of the brute. This must include the origin and growth as well as the guiding forces of the process. The static aspect is the above process, examined at a particular time and place. Living together with his fellows, man soon learnt the necessity of self-restraint, importance of order, and the value of division of work. In course of time these principles gave birth to social and economic institutions, under which specialisation of work became more varied and elaborate, till at last man evolved a well-defined and properly regulated division of functions between individuals, as well as between different groups of individuals, that, made up an organised community, or Society.

Development.

This process went on till it came to manifest itself, in course of time, in the growth of Arts and Sciences, which meant the fulfilment of both the spiritual as well as the material needs of mankind. The forces thus generated or set into motion for humanity as a whole, express themselves in the development of the social order and institutions.[1] When once developed, these institutions themselves become the promoters as well as the guardians of the arts[2] and sciences, affording them scope, protection and encouragement for further development, and so adding still further to the richness variety and fullness of civilisation.

As regards individuals, the same process shows itself in a gradual disciplining of primitive instincts, and of uncontrolled impulse, by reason. With the growing reign of reason in the individual, his association and collaboration with his fellows becomes more close and more constant, bringing about the activities and recreations which are the distinctive marks of progressive and civilised huma-

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[1] Golden Weiser, *Early Civilisation*, p. 18.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

nity The humanisation of the individual reacts upon the development of his society and influences the growth of the social and economic ideals and institutions. This mutual process of action and reaction leads to the birth and growth of culture and its adjunct Art.

Civilisations and their Relation to each other.

Since man first began unconsciously the process of civilisation and the evolution of the social order, there have been many civilisations on the earth's surface. The history of the world, is in essence little more than the collected story of these various civilisations, of different peoples scattered about in various parts of the world, following one another in time from the dawn of unrecorded history up to the present day. Each particular people of the ancient world progressed its own way, influenced by its own geographical environment and racial peculiarities. We, therefore, have the various civilisations in the history of mankind, each perhaps not without some tincture from its fellows and its predecessors ; but each possessing something peculiarly its own, which demarkates it from other civilisations.

Individuality of Civilisations.

These peculiarities which give its individuality to a civilisation, were in the olden days, more pronounced and better preserved than now, because of the paucity of means of communications. With the increased facilities of transport, which have well nigh annihilated distance, it is possible nowadays for one civilisation so to influence and dominate another, as scarcely to leave to it scope for developing on its own lines. We in the East know what this is ; for, we have, most of us, been a prey to this tendency on the part of the Western world to impose its ideas of civilisation on us. In the past such a thing was not easily feasible. There must have been, no doubt, borrowing from others and surrounding races ; but, this borrowing was neither enforced nor of essentials.

A brief review of the history of civilisations will make this point clear to us. The oldest probably in the long line, and the first about which we have sufficient historical data, is that of Egypt, and also perhaps of China. Following these came those of Assyria and Babylonia. Tracing these developments both West and East, we have in the West the Mediterranean Civilisation of Mycenœ and Crete followed by the Greek and Roman, and in the East the Persian and Indo-Aryan Civilisations.

Mutual Relationship and Influence of one Civilisation on another.

Now each of these civilisations has peculiarities of its own which give it its distinguishing character. Yet, we can in each trace elements, which may easily be proved to be borrowed from, or cognate with, its neighbouring and contemporary civilisations. Writers in the West trace the origins of all modern Civilisation in Europe and America to Greece. Does that in any way destroy the individual character of the modern European Civilisation? Or, for the matter of that, of its individual countries? Greece, again, we are told, was greatly beholden to the Mediterranean and Egyptian Civilisation. "With, then, the seed of one race and soil of another, tempered with the wind from a third and water from a fourth, the hardy plant grows into a mighty monarch of light and shade of life and substance, that is a unit by itself, a fellow and peer of its progenitor, a model and a guide for its successors."

And so the process goes on. One borrowing from the other assimilating it and finally making the borrowed item its own. Yet, it must not be forgotten that the borrowing is seldom of the essence. No people can borrow from another that, and hope to remain itself a distinct and thriving unit. For, consider for a moment what the essence of a Civilisation is? It is that which arises out of the peculiar racial inheritance of a given people combined with the effect of their geographical environment. The result of this combination, which is of course its own, forms the essence of a Civilisation. This can never come from outside ; it must grow from within and remain the basis of all the superstructure built upon it. Not even the half-breed Spanish-American Civilisation lacks this essential core. All the other borrowed or superadded portions are absorbed by this primary factor, which, completely remoulds them to conform to its nature, and stamps them with its own seal ; and at times so completely converts them as to make the borrowed portion impossible to recognise as such.

How Civilisation is Expressed.

This Civilisation i.e. the development of humanity is expressed through the various activities and institutions of a society. Religion, philosophy, arts and sciences are some of the channels[1] through which a race gives concrete form to its thoughts, its ideals, its desires. The background for the manifestation of the life of a people, and also the conditioning factor, is provided by the social institutions and conventions

[1] *Early Civilisation* by Golden Weiser, p. 15.

accepted from time to time in that society. In this work, as the title already specifies, we are not going to deal with all these varied aspects of Civilisation. We shall confine ourselves only to Art, as it influenced the Indian social system, and was influenced by it in turn, with particular reference to the place assigned to it in the social order of Ancient India.

Our study will, of course, be not confined to any given epoch in the history of India, since an entire period, commonly called the ancient period of Indian History, has been chosen to be the scope of this thesis. But granting this, there are, nevertheless, in this whole period, some permanent features abiding in the general culture and Civilisation of India, which may well entitle the study to be called that of the static aspect of that Civilisation as well.

Indian Civilisation a Fact.

That there is such an entity as the Indian Civilisation need not be laboured upon in this thesis. We have said that all civilisations in general are concerned with the growth and development of a people, and, that there is in every Civilisation an essence or a core ; a something individually its own which marks it off from others. Of the Indian Civilisation the same may be said. It has unquestionably an individuality of its own, despite all the vicissitudes of Indian history, all the commingling of races, and varieties of religions, and ideals. It has certain similarities with other Civilisations also ; but many more features and characteristics are entirely its own. Some of these are very important for the purpose of this thesis ; and so, we shall attempt to search for them.

Indian Civilisation.

When we look back into the annals of history, we read of Civilisations that have been greater, perhaps richer even, and in some ways more glorious than the Indian Civilisation. But they are no more. The people to-day living in these countries and bearing their names, have no cultural or even linguistic affinity with the Ancient Civilisations, with the exception perhaps, of China. The Egypt of to-day in no way resembles the glorious Egypt of the days of the Pharoahs. Its language, religion, social institutions, arts and sciences are all different from what they used to be. The same may be said of Greece, Persia, Assyria and Babylonia. But when we come to India, a different spectacle spreads itself before the eye. The Indian Civilisation still breathes. The past, which for the other nations is dead and buried, is for the Indian people still living and throbbing with life. Changes there have been, in this rich and ancient heritage, and those, too, of a very

drastic nature. Many features indicate a material departure from the Civilisation on its ancient lines. Old institutions and conventions manifest a decline and deterioration, as compared to the original strength and pristine purity of those institutions. Despite all that, it is really in essence the same old social system and ideals[1] that governed the life of the people in this land 3000 years ago, that still rule and influence Indian Society. The same religious practices, the same philosophical doctrines, the same ideals of life and its purpose that inspired the great sages of ancient days, like the authors of the Vedas, the Mahabharatha, the Ramayana, still form the basis and mainstay of the religion and philosophies of modern India. The ideals of manhood, womanliness and beauty, embodied in creations such as Rama and Sita, Siva and Parvati, still inspire the poets and artists of modern India,[2] and prescribe the rule of life to millions upon millions of its inhabitants.

The Civilisation, then, which has been rooted in the soil of this land and which is ingrained in the blood and bone of every Indian, is in essence still the old Indian Civilisation planted in this soil centuries upon centuries ago. This undying vitality of the ancient Indian Civilisation is, then, what differentiates it from the other Civilisations. What we have now to do is to find out the basic springs and main features of this Civilisation, which in the ultimate analysis accounts for this undying vitality of the culture.

Its Peculiarities.

We have already said that the essence of a Civilisation is the result of the combined action and interaction of the racial as well as the geographical factors in a people's cultural development.[3] Certain races have certain inherent tendencies ; these are accentuated or modified by their environment, not merely social, but also physical. The Greeks for example, their small city states, their maritime strength and ideals of life were chiefly the result of their environment, especially geographical. The rugged and mountainous surface made big states impossible. The general barrenness of the soil made the struggle for existence difficult, and therefore physical strength and perfection were so greatly priced. It is these again that made commerce inevitable to secure the necessities of life. Let us see how this combination of racial and geographical factors gave Indian Civilisation its individuality.

In the earliest picture that we have of the Indian Civilisation,

[1] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 73.
[2] Modern Indian Paintings such as those of N. Bose and A. Tagore etc.
[3] Dixon: *Building of Cultures.*

namely in the Vedas, the foremost record of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Aryan race, we observe not only the consciousness of an original racial endowment, but also a distinct trait of idealism.[1] We shall not in this thesis go further back than the advent of the Aryans for lack of sufficient material. It is in the Vedas that we find this consciousness of race, and a vein of idealism running through the later hymns, which lead to the conclusion, that this Idealism was a distinct racial characteristic. Was this trait accentuated or modified by the new atmosphere and environment of Aryavarta? India has been a land, which, from time immemorial has been noted for its wealth. This wealth does not merely consist of gold and silver; but rather her riches are due to the wealth and abundance of her natural resources.[2] Nature has been very liberal in this country. She has given it a soil so fertile, that with the minimum of labour maximum results may be obtained. In such a country man does not need to labour much to supply his daily wants of life. Inhabitants therefore, of this land had a great amount of leisure, which gave them time to observe and think. This naturally led to speculation that grew more and more profound as time went on, and the knowledge of the mysteries of nature progressed. Hence, idealism, which was the inherent trait in these Aryans, rather than being modified or replaced, was richly nurtured and rapidly developed. Speculation about the secrets of life and death, and idealism regarding the concrete ways of life, grew, flourished and ultimately showed themselves in the natural religious instinct of these people, and gave to their Civilisation a religious character.

With these characteristics, came into being the social institutions of the Aryans. These institutions, facilitated and encouraged the growth of the original tendencies among the Ancient Indians, and therefore, secured for themselves a very firm hold on the people. They cultivated and intensified the natural religious and idealistic instinct of the people. At the same time, they had such capacity for assimilation, that they absorbed and naturalised all the foreign influences, that were either in this land originally, or, entered it later. What is most remarkable, is, that through the whole of that process they preserved their own individuality.

Chief among these institutions and a most prominent feature of social life in Ancient India, was Caste or social division in definite and permanent strata, determined by birth. This institution,

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[1] Dutt: *History of Civilisation in A. India*, Vol. I, p. 140.
[2] Das: *Educational System of Ancient Hindus*, p. 4.

now degenerating, had preserved the racial characteristics and ideals, which have resulted in what we have called the undying vitality of the Civilisation of this country. Says Dubois

> "I believe caste divisions to be in many respects the chef d'oeuvre, the happiest effort of Hindoo legislation. I am persuaded that it is simply and solely due to the distribution of the people into castes, that India did not lapse into a state of barbarism, and that she preserved and perfected the art and science of civilisation, while most of the other Nations of the earth remained in a state of barbarism."

In these then, we may say, is the secret of India's undying vitality, namely her idealism, the deeply religious instinct of her people, and the carefully planned organisation of her society. These have formed and coloured her social institutions, which in turn have preserved the culture and the characteristics that make up India's individuality, and mark her Civilisation off from others, and therefore form its essence.

The continuity with the past which has been thus preserved in India, unlike other ancient lands, has saved this country and her people from complete decay and cultural death, that has befallen the great races which once flourished along the shores of the Mediterranean. The Vedic culture is rooted, as it were, in the soil itself now, so that attempts to westernise India, say on the lines of Turkey or Persia, would fail. These attempts have to an extent already failed, not because the modern innovations were brought upon an uncongenial soil, but because, even in their present decline, Indians have something to oppose the forces of materialism with.

Art. Having explained the bearing of the term Indian Civilisation, we shall now try to understand what the central idea of this work conveys. Our purpose is to determine the place of Art in the Ancient Indian social setting. In order to understand the title better, it is now necessary to determine what exactly is to be included in the term Art. As regards the meaning of the term Art, the next chapter is devoted wholly to it, and so we need say no more in this place about it. Here just enough will be said to make the denotation clear, and therefore the scope of the work.

The term Art has a very wide denotation. In fact, no one word in the English language is used to denote so many different kinds of human activities. We speak of singing, or music, or dancing as arts. But within the same breath we might be talking about the art of cooking, of dress-making, riding, driving, talking, thieving, love-making, and even of logic and sometimes even of science as

an art. Now, if we could find in all these activities, loosely called Art, some common factor, it would help to solve our difficulty. After the most careful analysis, and consulting some recognised authorities as will be seen hereafter, we find the one common factor in all activities worthy of being called Art is *self-expression* ; i.e. there is, in all these activities, scope for embodying the personality of the individual practising them, namely, the artist. Art then, we may say provisionally, is the *self-expression* of the individual practising it, and, a *revelation of beauty* as experienced by that individual. More we need not say here because the specific meaning or connotation of the term as well as the explanation of the provisional definition, will follow in the next chapter.

To discuss all those activities loosely styled as Art above, would widen the extent of this survey far beyond the proportions of an M. A. Thesis. Material in the form of translation is very scanty. The present writer, not knowing Sanskrit, is faced with too severe a handicap even to attempt a work of that dimension. As it is, the writer's inability to go to the original sources has been a great drawback in the development of this work. Because of these reasons the scope of this work has been curtailed, in the following manner.

Fine Arts and their Aesthetic Purpose.

Writers on this subject have classified Art in a number of ways. Some make a twofold division : into art, and fine art ; others a threefold division, of the arts of conduct, liberal arts, and fine arts. The latter division is given in the Encyclopædia Britannica, and[1] appears to be a more reasonable division than the former, which is one of degree only. We shall use that as our basis for limiting the scope of Art The Encyclopædia Britannica classifies Art into fine arts, arts of conduct and liberal arts. The fine arts of this definition

> "are concerned with the attainment of the beautiful, the arts of conduct with that of the good, and the liberal arts with that of the useful."

This threefold classification includes in itself all the activities we have called Art. Now the definition of Art that we have given above is very exclusive. It must have two essential qualities those of *self-expression* and *revelation of beauty*. According to this classification as basis, only fine arts answer to this test. They therefore are Art proper. The others have also a utilitarian aspect The fine arts have only the aesthetic purpose i.e. to realise oneself and

[1] Article on *Art.*

to reveal beauty. They therefore conform to the meaning of art we have explained. Hence for the purpose of this work, Art for us will only include the Fine Arts.

Our next inquiry is to explain what arts should be called Fine Arts, in the light of the definition given above. On this point there seems to be no settled opinion. Most writers give arbitrary classifications of what they consider ought to be included in the Fine Arts. Some merely include painting, sculpture, architecture, as Digby Wyatt does in his work on "Fine Arts". Others include music, and some also the literary arts. The Encyclopædia Britannica, in its enumeration of the Fine Arts, gives us architecture, sculpture, painting. music, poetry and drama. This, I think is the most comprehensive classification of the Fine Arts I have met with, and suits our purpose very well, for it includes all arts traditionally regarded as fine arts in the ancient Indian sense too. In this thesis art will include all the arts enumerated above, and one more, namely dancing.

The remaining groups of Art, namely, those of conduct and liberal arts we will not neglect altogether. References to them, and supporting evidence as well as proofs, if available, will be used to support the main thesis. But evidence from these sources will always be secondary, and used only where that from the Fine Arts is inadequate.

It may be added that the Fine Arts, also, will not be treated from the view point of either their history, technique, or artistic merit, as being besides the point, but only from the standpoint of the place of Art in the actual social life in India, before the advent of the Muslims.

Art, Individual and National.

The definition of Art given above, makes Art purely individualistic. No creation can be called Art, unless and until it is a real expression of how an artist felt at a particular moment—the moment of creation. The stirring of his emotional self has to be so intense that he feels himself impelled to give expression to it. Thus the essentially personal factor in art is very important. In giving expression to his emotion, the artist realises himself and at the same time reveals beauty. Despite this essentially individualistic or personal nature of every Fine Art, we talk of the art of a nation, of a race, of a people, and of continents ; even also of an epoch. We speak of the art of France, the art of the Arabs, or the Turks, or the art of Europe, Asia, or of the art of the Renaissance. A distinctly collective use of the

term, which seems fundamentally opposed to its quality of individualism. Is this correct? Has a nation, a race, a people, or an epoch a personality to express? An individual, we have already seen, expresses his personality in his creations. Only then can his work deservedly be called an artistic creation. But can we speak in the same strain of a whole people or an epoch?

Sociologists have drawn analogies between a human being and society, which makes the latter a living organism possessing both a mind and a body. If this analogy is well-founded, it makes self-expression necessary for a society too. Its body is the social structure, and its mind consists not only of the aggregate of the minds of the individuals who form a given society, but of all those minds which have gone before. Carrying this analogy further, we may say, that the Art of a people consists of the sum total of the creations of all its artists, plus what has been given as an inheritance by the previous generations, and which has been accepted in the present.

We also have divisions into national arts, such as Chinese, Japanese, Indian and so on. Certain qualities are common to all the artists of each race which make such a division possible. For example minute details, a particular perspective, a certain treatment of the human form neither realistic nor idealistic, delicacy of touch, line effects, form the outstanding characteristics of old Chinese Art. Similarly, idealisation of the form with a relative indifference to objective realism, minute details in decoration, a certain treatment of the eyes and hands so as to express particular ideas or ideals, use of certain conventions, proportions, etc , are some of the many peculiarities of Indian Art, which make it so very different from the Art of other nations.

We may conclude therefore, that it is quite accurate to speak of the art of a nation or a race. It is in this collective sense i.e. as an Art of a people that the term Indian Art will be used in this thesis. Havel tells us that from the remains of the artistic expression of a race we can gather what the general thoughts, ideals, desires and longings of a race or nation must have been. It is through its creative efforts that one nation or race tells posterity, how its people lived, thought and expressed themselves. We shall, by an examination of the remains of Indian Art and artistic evidence, try and determine the place of art in the lives of the ancient Indians, during two distinct periods of time, namely, the ancient period and the medieval.

Scope of Subject. The examination of artistic remains alone is not sufficient to determine the place of Art in life. It is the life i.e. the social life, and its social background that has to be studied and understood, in order to determine the real place of Art in the Indian social structure. For, our purpose here is to show, how Art entered into and influenced the cultural life of Ancient India. In order to get a correct appreciation of the life of the times, we shall have to examine, besides the above-mentioned evidence, the motives, ideas, ideals and beliefs, and show how the people sought to realise these in their daily lives, and how far Art aided this realisation. For the latter purpose, we shall have to study especially the social institutions of the times, for, it is through the study of those, both in theory and in practice, that we can find a nation's ideals of life in their practical application

Time Limit of Thesis. The dynamic aspect of the relation between Art and society we do not study here at all, largely because the evidence available is not sufficient to note the changing phases. The history of either Art or Society is equally unnecessary. The title confines the subject to the period of history covered by the term Ancient India. The period, generally accepted by historians as the Ancient Indian period is up to the fifth century A. D. From hence commences the Medieval period for them. As ours is not a historical work, we intend to modify this time limit. Ancient India, from the artistic view point, remains the same until the establishment of the Muslim dominion on the soil of *Aryavarta*. Before that, except for ruthless destruction, Islam hardly affected Indian culture. The stream of Indian Art beginning with the Emperor Asoka followed a steady and un-interrupted course until the establishment of the Muslim Domination, that is 12th century A. D. The Muslims brought with them a totally different philosophy of both Art and life from that already in existence in *Aryavarta*. Hence with the establishment of their domination, our period for ancient India may be justly said to come to an end.

India. There is one more term to be defined yet, before we conclude this section, and that is "India". India is a fairly modern term. It now includes the whole land from the Himalayas to Ceylon, and from Sind to Assam. The ancients never knew the whole country as one. For them it always consisted of two parts, the North and the South. The North, after the Aryan Conquest was termed *Aryavarta* or the home of the Aryans, while the South was *Dakshinapatha*. The northern as well as southern limits of *Arya-*

varta were never definitely settled. The north and north-western boundaries varied in the hands of each successive sovereign. The conventional southern boundary was taken to be the Vindhyas and the Satpuras. But, the cultural boundaries of *Aryavarta* in course of time spread far beyond these limits, and practically embraced the whole of India as we know it to-day. The Aryans spread their sway all over India, as the religions, the caste or social system, and the linguistic evidence prove. North and westwards, with the establishment of the Buddhist Empire, its cultural dominion spread both East and West almost as far as Central Asia and China. In those ages Aryavarta was the University of the East, the common house of culture and civilisation, the universal school of arts and science.

With the Muslim domination, *Aryavarta* changed its name to Hindoostan and has been known as such ever since. We shall however prefer to speak of this region as *Aryavarta*.

The portion of the country south of the Vindhyas, the Aryans called *Dakshinapatha* or South, now known by its corrupt form "the Deccan". We will use the same term, as being more familiar. Whenever we want to refer to India in the modern sense, meaning the whole country, we shall use the modern denomination—India. For North India, as signifying *Aryavarta*, we will use that word, and Deccan for the South.

Treatment of Subject.

As regards our plan of surveying the subject, it is to be done in three main parts :

The first, or introductory part, will contain two chapters. The first introduces the subject, explaining the various terms in the title ; and the second deals with the elucidation of the intricacies involved in the term Art, and its relation to life. This chapter is headed "The Nature and Place of Art in Life".

The next part is headed "Influences that affected Art and Life in Ancient India". These influences are worked out in three chapters, the first giving us a sketch of the historical background, so as mainly to weigh the racial influence and its contribution. The next chapter is more direct, and deals with the "Motive Forces" of the period ; these are discussed in their due order of importance. The third chapter is devoted to the Social Institutions of Ancient India, and their influence on Art and life generally.

The third part of the Thesis is called "Art and Life in Ancient India". Here the direct mutual relation, action and interaction, of Art and Society are reviewed under the following heads, each forming a separate chapter, namely "Conception and Ideals of Indian

Art" ; "Review of Arts in Ancient India" and "Art in the Daily Life of Ancient India". This review is followed by the last chapter of conclusions.

Forms of Evidence used. Evidence is an important branch of a research work. We will go over the types of evidence available for our purpose. Evidence is generally of two kinds, monumentary, and literary. The latter may again be subdivided into (a) direct or scientific, from treatises, written directly on the matter concerned ; and (b) indirect, that is that which contains mere allusions, such as in the dramas, diaries, books of travellers recording the writer's impressions, etc.

Monumentary Evidence. Monumentary evidence consists of surviving artistic records, such as sculpture, architecture, painting, music and inscriptions. From this particular class of evidence we will, where possible, use photographs of works recognised by expert opinion to be really the finest specimens of their kind. But to a selection of this kind, also, there is a limit, for copies or even illustrations of the monuments proper are difficult and extremely costly to secure. The remains of Indian Art, it must not be forgotten, are scattered all over the world, often far beyond reach. All the best works of the *Stupas* of Amaravati, for example, adorn the museums of England. It will thus be seen that where one would like to get the best illustrations, one may not be able to secure them. All these difficulties will, I am afraid, make the monumentary evidence in this work not as satisfactory as the writer would like to make it.

Literary or Written Evidence. Literary evidence, as mentioned above is of two kinds, direct or indirect. Direct evidence we get from treatises dealing with the varied branches of Art, such as Bharata's *Natya-Shastra* on Drama and Dancing, *Shilpa Shastras*, the *Chitra Kala's* and the rest. Indirect evidence by way of allusions or references abound in the literature of the age, especially from works of Kalidas, Bhavabhuti, Bana, Harsha etc. One well conversant with Sanskrit would be able to make ample use of all this material, but the writer of this thesis is unfortunately not acquainted with the language ; and hence has to depend on translations only, as far as they are available.

Testimonies of foreigners form another important branch of this form of evidence. After the establishment of the Buddhist Empire and the spread of the religion both East and West, *Arya-*

varta became the source of all inspiration and culture. To it flocked scholars and pilgrims from various countries such as China, Persia, Arabia, Greece, and the Roman Empire. After about a thousand years, Buddhism waned in influence in the land of its birth, and established its home in China. This increased more than ever the contact between the two great civilisations, and pilgrims from China poured into *Aryavarta* to learn more about their religion, as well as to perform their pilgrimage to various places that had been sanctified by the presence of their beloved Master. These pilgrims give us a glowing description of the greatness of the land they traversed. That it was known as the University of the East is not at all surprising, when one reads the accounts of the various educational institutions given by these travellers. Taxila, Nalanda, Benares, Pataliputra, were some of the Universities of the day. To be able to appreciate what they were, one ought to read the descriptions in full of these pilgrims. What place was assigned to Art in these centres of education will, of course, be our main concern.

All these taken together then, will form the written and monumentary evidence in support of our dissertation on the Place of Art in the Civilisation of Ancient India.





CHAPTER II

NATURE AND PLACE OF ART IN SOCIAL LIFE

The preceding Chapter has already explained the extent of the term "Art" as used in this Thesis, and indicated the several individual arts that would be reviewed in this attempt. However, for a just appreciation, the connotation and implication of the generic term Art need investigation, and that will occupy a considerable part of this Chapter.

Art and Technique.

Reverting once more to the variety of human activities that fall within the sphere of Art as reviewed in the last chapter, and studying them carefully, we would find that in order to acquire proficiency in any of them, one has to go through a course of theoretical instruction as well as practical work. Take music, dancing, cooking or any other activity called an Art. Certain theories in connection with each have to be mastered first, and then applied. We may ask, does a person, after he has mastered both the theory and practice, produce a work of art? In other words does a man who has learnt to handle a brush and paints and knows the elements of drawing, or even a chisel and hammer and knows the elements of modelling, produce a work of art? Not always. In fact a very small proportion out of the many, who learn the theory and technique of any art, really produce works of art. For a work to be a piece of Fine Art, there must be something else, above and beyond a mere knowledge of the theory and correctness of technique. There must be a new creation in every true work of

Art, properly so called, which must not only represent the artist's individuality, but which must at the same time be an embodiment of the artist's conception of *Beauty*, as appropriate to that particular creation. Only those who have artistic talent inborn in them really become artists, after they have mastered the technique.

Art is thus the self-expression of the artist in correct technique. The impulse and the technique are not of equal importance. For, the desire for self-expression, or the quality that produces real Art, is in the spiritual make up of only a few ; while the technique may be acquired by any one who applies himself to the task. It is the former then, that may be taken to be the essential quality of true Art. The latter is desirable and necessary ; but only if the former be there. So, self-expression we may say, is one of the most important essence of Art.

In addition, however, there must be, in every genuine work of Art, a revelation of the beauty the artist has felt or found in creating his piece. Let us now see how the latter characteristic is arrived at. Perhaps the best way to answer this question would be, by first explaining a few definitions of Art by well-known authorities, and next, seeing if from those definitions, we can deduce this quality which is as important for real Art as self-expression.

V. A. Smith, historian of *Fine Art in India and Ceylon* defines Art as an :

> "unfettered and impassioned realisation of the ideals kindled within us by the thing without us." [1]

Percy Dearmer, in his book on *Art and Religion* defines Art

> "as the expression of spiritual values in terms of beauty.....the result of some intense experience which the artist tries to communicate to the spectator." "Beauty" he further explains "is something outside us, it is born, whereas art is made;.....Beauty exists, and all art is man's answer to that beauty..... even a worship of it."[2]

Clutton Brock says

> "art is the expression of a certain attitude towards reality.. ...the recognition of something greater than man, and when that recognition is not, art dies. The real beauty of art is the beauty of value and wonder. Art, therefore, is akin to religion, both are an expression of man's sense of the spiritual significance of the Universe, an attempt to express things which are unseen and eternal." [3]

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[1] *History of Fine Arts, India and Ceylon*: Introduction.
[2] *Art and Religion*: Editor, P. Dearmer, pp. 4, 7.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Benedetto Croce says, that Art is intuitive knowledge or Art is intuition, but intuition is not always Art. Artistic intuitions are wider and more complex than those which we generally experience, and are always of sensations and impressions. Art therefore is,

"expression of impression and not expression of expressions."[1]

Knowledge, he says, is acquired by two methods; to use his own words, it has two forms—it is intuitive or logical. Knowledge obtained through the imagination is intuitive and individual and of the Universe; knowledge obtained through intellect is logical, of individual things, or of the relations between them.[2]

A work of Art or masterpiece is that which conveys something from the world of spirit, imagination not before realised, to the world of everyday life.[3]

Nature of Art.

From these definitions we are able to pick out two salient characteristics that must be present in any creation designated, a work of Art. The first feature is that the work must embody the artist's personality and so be a medium for his *self-expression*. The second essential characteristic is that every piece of Art must embody some aspect of the *Beautiful* which is akin to something from the world of spirit. Without these two, a work of Art can hardly exist, or be called Art.

Self-expression, Result of Inspiration caused by an Experience of Beauty.

As regards self-expression or the expression of the artist's personality in his creation, we may say that it is an unconscious result of a cause called inspiration, experienced by the artist resulting in the embodying of some part or aspect of his personality in his work.

Self-Expression.

Let us examine the process by which a work of Art comes into being. The artist, a bundle of certain spiritual and temperamental endowments which it would take us too far afield to explain at length, perceives something in the external world; or is struck by an idea or occurrence that sets his imagination and emotions aflame. From that state arise images which so haunt the artist, that he knows no peace until he gives this emotional wave an outlet. This outlet is obtained when the images that the imagination has created, find concrete expression in sound, colour, clay or

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[1] Benedetto Croce: *Aesthetics*, p. 12.
[2] B. Croce: *Aesthetics*, p. 13.
[3] S. Casson from *20th Century Sculpture*, p. 6.

stone, or any other medium or form of expression best suited to the artist's temperament, environment, education and experience.

This whole sequence is the result of a cerebro-nervous process that must precede, and may so be regarded as the cause of the artist's self-expression. The process of inspiration caused by an emotional experience of great intensity is the *primum mobile* in artistic creation.

Analysis of Artistic Process.

This process of aesthetic production, may, for the purposes of analysis, be divided into four distinct stages :—

According to Croce, the first stage is that of 'impression'. Something in the external world stirs the artist, and a contact or relation is established between him and the thing through which he gathers certain impressions. This is the stage of impression.

In the artist's imagination, these impressions get assimilated, and become one with the already existing thoughts and impressions. The result is expression of this process, or what Croce calls the second stage[1] of "expression, or spiritual aesthetic synthesis". Here, the idea that is to take concrete form later is conceived, and the external shape it is to take is also visualised. This, therefore, is the real creative stage, when the new creation is born, or the expression is given to the impression, or the work of Art to be has taken imaginative form, in the artist's mind.

The result of this creation gives us the third stage of "hedonistic accomplishment, or the pleasure of the Beautiful". This means no more than the pleasure experienced by an artist after a successful creative effort, the same as that of a mother's when she beholds her new born babe for the first time.

"The last stage is that of the translation of the aesthetic fact into physical phenomena."[2] When this translation is made in the shape of a concrete work of Art, that work must needs be coloured by the original impulse, or impressions, or motive force which started the process of creation.

Self-Expression at 'b' Stage.

Hence the characteristic of every great work of Art, is, that it embodies in some measure the personality of the artist at the moment of the experience. The stage at which this merging of the artist's personality is accomplished, is the second described in the above process Self-expression, which is so necessary for a work of Art, is no more than

[1] The 'b' stage.

[2] Croce: *Aesthetics*, p. 96.

the embodiment of the artist's personality, or at least an aspect thereof upper-most in the artist's being at the time of his creating a work of Art.

Self-Expression Concretised.

Self-expression, therefore, is mainly a subjective phenomenon. That subjective phenomenon has an objective aspect, viz., in the creation or the work of Art produced. The actual work is the objective evidence of the artist's subjective experience, and it is that which links Art with society, for, it is through the objective translation that others are able to perceive and share the experience of the artist.

Hence on this reasoning, it is always possible

> "all[1] other conditions remaining equal on perceiving them (i. e. works of Art) to reproduce in ourselves the already produced impression or intuition"..... "What else are these combinations of the words called poetry, prose-poems, novels, romances, tragedies or comedies, but physical stimulants[2].....or reminders that enable us to recapture the first impressions of the artist?"

What effects have Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* or Wordsworth's *Ode to Immortality* on us but this? The Sphinx, the Pyramids, the ruins of Persepolis, the Parthenon, all are reminders, which wake in us the same impressions that made the artist produce them. The impression in the ordinary mind may not be of equal intensity with that of the original artist ; but it suffices to bring even the ordinary mind into touch with the spirit or essence of things, as the artist visualised them. It is the work then, that lives to bear the message of the artist from century to century, age to age, as Keats well portrays in his *Ode to a Grecian Urn*.

Perception of Beauty Causes the Artistic Process to Begin.

The next question that naturally arises from the above discussion is what kind of an object or idea causes this whole process of inspiration in an artist's mind? To put it more simply, what is the incentive to creation? Dr. Coomaraswamy gives the following answer to this question. He says "the artist must first see beauty and then reveal it". Hence the cause of inspiration is the perception and recognition of Beauty somewhere by the artist. The effect of this Beauty on him is, that it draws the artist from himself, and brings him in touch with greater things—call it the world of spirit, or intuition.

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[1] Croce: *Aesthetics*, p. 97.
[2] *Ibid.*

Beauty is thus the stimulant of aesthetic experience ; and, according to Croce, it is embodied in monuments of Art.

Galsworthy supports this view, that the cause of all artistic effort is the Beautiful. He gives us a criterion by which we may distinguish a work of Art from one which is not.

> "That is art, when, for however brief a moment, it replaces within me interest in myself by interest in itself."....

and thus :

> "links me to the universal by making me forget the individual in me. And for that moment, and only while that moment lasts, it is to me a work of art.....and warms me with unconscious vibration. The essential quality that gives to art the power of exciting this unconscious vibration, this impersonal emotion, is called beauty."

This quotation confronts us with another problem. We have said that Art is the artist's self-expression and self-realisation. Galsworthy says it is self-forgetfulness. Do these two views tend to be contradictory? No. The author himself later on explains this seeming contradiction.

> "Ah ! but I thought that self-expression is not the first and instant effect of art. The new impetus is the after effect of that momentary replacement of one's self by the self of the work before us. It is surely the result of that brief span of enlargement, enfranchisement and rest."[1]

And thus are the two positions reconciled.

Beauty. What is Beauty? one is impatient to know, since without its inspiration no Art can exist? Various people, from Socrates down to our times, have written about beauty, attempted to define and analyse its constituents, yet, with no general agreement even on essentials. A thorough analysis of the term would lead us into metaphysics—a complication that the present writer must needs avoid. We must, nevertheless, consider the nature of Beauty as embodied in artistic creation, for a proper understanding of the work before us.

Croce[2] defines beauty as "successful expression", or rather as expression and nothing more, because expression when it is not successful, is not expression.

> "Consequently, the ugly is unsuccessful expression" says Croce. "For the beautiful is not a physical fact; it does not belong to things, but to the activities of man, to spiritual energy."[3]

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[1] "What is Art" from *The Inn of Tranquillity.*

[2] Croce: *Aesthetics*, p. 79.

[3] *Ibid.*

For our purpose here, we shall try only to find out if possible the main ingredients of Beauty, recognised as such by standard authorities on the subject.

Rhythm and Vitality as Ingredients of Beauty.

Galsworthy analyses beauty thus :

> "This essential quality of art has also and more happily been called Rhythm. And what is rhythm, if not that mysterious harmony between part and part, and part and whole, which gives what is called life..... In short, Vitality—is the one quality inseparable from a work of art. For nothing which does not seem to a man possessed of this rhythmic vitality, can ever steal him out of himself."[1]

Croce endorses this view :

> "What we admire" he says "in genuine works of art is the perfect imaginative form in which a state of mind clothes itself; that is what we call the life, the unity, the fullness, the consistency of the work of art. What offends us in false or faulty work is the unresolved discord of different moods, their mere superimposition or confusion, or their alteration which gets but a superficial unity forced upon it by the author, who for this purpose makes use of some abstract idea or plan or of some unaesthetic passion."[2]

From these two essential qualities emerge what Galsworthy calls rhythm or harmony, and vitality, or he sometimes uses only one word for both, namely rhythmic vitality ; and what Croce calls, the life and the unity, the fullness and consistency.

Harmony, or rhythm, then is the essential blending together of all the various parts, that constitutes a creation, including the proportions, perspective, mood, medium, etc. Vitality is what makes the Art or work live ; embodying the emotion that gave it birth, it is able to recreate the same in others. It is the essence or life spark.

> "What we seek and enjoy in art, what makes our heart leap up, and ravishes our admiration, is the life, the movement, the passion, the fire, the feeling of the artist; that alone gives us the supreme criterion for distinguishing works of true and false art, inspiration and failure. Passion and feeling cover a multitude of sins. If they are lacking nothing can take their place."[3]

This essential quality gives life and unity to the various parts of a work of Art, say a landscape, a statue, or a symphony. Hence is it called 'vitality' for, through its co-ordinative power, it makes the whole live, and so constitutes a work of Art.

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[1] "What is art" from *Inn of Tranquillity.*

[2] Croce: from *Philosophies of Beauty* by Carrit, p. 244.

[3] *Ibid.*,—15.

These, then, are some of the main ingredients of Beauty, namely, harmony and vitality. They must be present where Art is. It is the perception of this Beauty in the external world that gives rise to inspiration in an artist. It is again, this Beauty that he reveals through his work. To quote Coomaraswamy, "the artist must first see beauty, then reveal it". This naturally makes us ask the question, is beauty a relation to us, or is it merely a subjective or objective phenomenon? This controversy has run through the whole history of philosophy, and is the crux of the subject. Both sides of the question have been alternately supported and denied, with the result that we are no better off in the matter than when the controversy first started in Plato's days. For our purpose, however, it is not at all necessary to indulge in the controversy. For us, it suffices that Beauty is there, and that it affects the artist; whether it is a relation to him, or exists apart from him in external objects, is not of consequence to us. What is of consequence is the effect of this perception of Beauty on the artist, and the expression that effect finds in his actual work.

Artist and Man. Difference quantitative not qualitative.

It must be remembered that an artist differs from an ordinary human being mainly in his spiritual make-up. In philosophical terms, Croce gives the distinction thus: "Art is the expression of impressions".[1] Between the impression of an ordinary man and that of an artist, there is no difference in quality, only in quantity. "The difference is not intensive but extensive". The type of experience is the same, but the artist's impressions are more extensive, therefore he feels more intensely because

> "certain men have a greater aptitude, a more frequent inclination, fully to express certain complex states of the soul. These men are known in ordinary language as artists."[2]

The types of emotions roused in the artist and ourselves are of the same quality; if they were not, we would not be able to understand the work. Besides great[3] artists are said to reveal us to ourselves. How could this be possible unless there was identity of nature between their imagination and ours, and unless the difference was only one of quantity and not of quality. Here we have the difference, expressed in correct aesthetic language, which it is hardly possible in daily life to use. In ordinary parlance this same difference is felt and spoken of thus :—

[1] Croce: *Aesthetics*, p. 13.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

Impressions Intensive; Senses Keener; Feels Intensely; Reactions Stronger and therefore Expression Artistic.

The artists' power of perceiving beauty and grasping its meaning is far keener than the average. He has in addition what is known in daily parlance as the "artist's second vision" meaning thereby, that he can see, feel, and read into natural phenomena more than ever an ordinary human being can. All of us daily see clouds, feel the wind, hear the nightingale. Yet, for how many of us has the cloud a message or the west wind a secret, that it had for Shelley? This second vision is also more quick to grasp the eternal beauty, and to correlate these experiences of beauty, till at last, they take on forms and images that haunt the artist, and completely master his imagination, so that he is filled with exultation. This joy that the artist experiences is much greater than that of the average, because his sensibilities are far keener than the ordinary. The pictures or impressions that his imagination produces are strong, vivid, and of a compelling character that clamour for or demand transformation into forms more concrete, and the artist knows no peace until he gives them such. It is when, and only when, the artist has given forth all that has deeply stirred him that he feels contentment and peace.

In aesthetic language, Croce expresses this phenomenon thus :—

> "By elaborating his impressions, man frees himself from them. By objectifying them, he removes them from him, and makes himself their superior. The liberating and purifying function of art is another aspect, and another formula of its character as activity. Activity is the deliverer just because it drives away passivity."[1]

Shelley, in his *Ode to the West Wind*, expresses the tumult followed by the same peace of the spirit so well, that the reader can feel it too. The power and the majesty of the wind fill his mind with a rich wealth of imagery and powerful longings and emotions that seem to rend the poet's very soul. He wants relief in expression, and so goes to his medium,—words and word music—to pour forth all the yearnings of his soul in the lines,

> "Make me Thy lyre even as the forest is.
> What if my leaves are falling as its own !
> The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
> Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
> Sweet thou in its sadness"

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

Reaching the climax when he yearningly calls
"Be thou spirit fierce,
My Spirit ! Be thou me impetuous one !"

Yet, what peace must have been the Poet's, after the tumult was over, we are made to feel too, as expressed in the following serene lines, "Ah wind, if Winter comes can Spring be far behind"? Such then are the artist's faculties, far keener than the average individual's in every way, and hence to perceive, realise, and express beauty too his capacity is much greater.

The Artist, Is he a genuine Creator or an instrument through which a Society expresses itself?

While we are dealing with the artist and Art, there is one question, namely, how far is the artist an original creator, and how far is he a creature of his surroundings, which needs to be answered. It becomes necessary to ask this question, because one must not forget that Art is the creation of the artist, and the artist himself is born in and brought up under the prevailing ideals and existing institutions of society that train his faculties and fashion his outlook on life. Hence how much effect has all this on him, and is he in spite of it all a genuine creator?

A Genuine Creator.

An artist is most certainly a genuine creator, in the sense that all that he expresses is what he has genuinely felt and experienced. It is the expression of his own particular experience of a general phenomenon, such as, say, Love. It is common to all mankind even as Death. Yet whenever the artist expresses his experience of this particular phenomenon, there is the essential personal touch, unique, because it is justly felt and truly translated into a form most adequate. "It is those who can turn their particular feelings to the purpose of a general inspiration" who are the true masters of Art—says Casson.[1] In that manner Art is the individual expression of experience common to all mankind.

Again, Art reveals to us forms of Beauty in common occurrences that we hardly notice. This is due, as we have already said, to the artist's keener vision. This is, therefore, another original contribution of the artist, entitling him to the claim of an original creation. Granting all this, he is a member of a society, creature of his age and circumstances ; and hence is influenced by the ideals of the

[1] Casson: *XX Century Sculpture*, p. 7.

society, which he unconsciously adopts and expresses in his own particular way.

As Society's instrument.

Kaines Smith[1] exaggerates the tendency described above, slightly; but his fundamental idea is correct when he says :—

> "An artist is never a free agent, he is controlled he is even bound hand and foot by his times. He is the expression rather of collective than of individual thought; but he has this advantage over his fellows, that if his character is so strong for good that he can, in spite of a low level of idealism about him, conceive and express a great ideal, (therefore if he is sufficiently great he can rise above his environment, that is he is not bound hand and foot) the worth of the work will be recognised even by those who cannot grasp its full significance. The Aphrodite of Melos stands in evidence of this truth."

The bracket inserted is ours.

For example, in a society dominated by religion, all Art produced is religious in theme, sentiment, and form, e.g. the Art of XVI Century Italy. In a society predominantly secular, on the other hand, the principal note is worldly, namely the Mughal Court paintings. The ancient Indian Art, the ancient Egyptian, Chinese Art are all examples, primarily, of religious Art. Modern Art, on the other hand, is largely secular. Greek Art, though portraying the lives of their Gods and Goddesses was still secular in spirit.

When the social order is in the melting pot, and when new ideas and ideals are being formed, Art is often at a stand-still, finding it impossible to flourish in such a congested atmosphere. During the French Revolution there was no Art worth the name, so also in the first few years of the Russian upheaval. The same may be said of the early Mahommedan Period (XII Cent. to XVI Centuries) in India, that, the cultural output was considerably poorer because of the social disorder then prevalent.

During the Moghul period in India, men and women of the Court, the occupations and amusements of the courtiers, their homes, gardens etc., were the sources from which the artists of the day drew their inspiration. In ancient India, on the other hand an entirely different atmosphere prevailed. Love, reverence, renunciation, worship or *bhakti* were the order of the day, and it was there that the artists reached and found that which enthralled them.

There have also been ages of transition from the religious to the secular age. Men began to use their reason, and realised that there was besides this dogmatic religion, something more real and deep in life. They sought emancipation from the thraldom of dogma and

[1] *Greek Art and National Life* by Kaines Smith, p. 363.

the bondage of convention born of orthodoxy. The joy of life began to assert itself, and this is expressed in the Art, religious in form yet secular in spirit, such as the Renaissance Art of 16th Cent. Europe. The Madonnas and the Christs of the day were so human, so lovingly wrought, that one traces in the expression far more than a religious emotion, namely human passion.

Thus then, we may conclude that, though the artist is a genuine creator, he is also at the same time an instrument through which society expresses itself. For born, nurtured, educated under the prevailing social institutions and conventions, already the possessor of a rich heritage—the artist comes into the world with an accumulated wealth of culture, tradition and ideal that cannot but affect his whole personality most intimately. It is on these foundations that he builds himself, and then gives forth all he has to say to the world around him. What he says is in the sense given above, new, original, and beneficial to mankind. Collectively his work is a reflex of his society's culture as imbibed and developed and expressed by him. Individually, it is his own particular experience reflected in his creation.

Are Artists Born or Made. The last discussed proposition brings another to the forefront. The question is often asked, are artists born or made? This, in a sense, is a futile discussion, yet very often indulged in, and so we may take note of it. Artists most certainly must be born artists. Without a gift of the particular faculties already described, no man can be an artist, however favourable the environment. But, artists are made, in the sense that environment, taken in the broadest sense, develops their inborn talent and gives it the best scope ; an uncongenial environment may kill it altogether. In that sense an artist is made by society. But even before society can exercise this influence, the artist must be born with the necessary natural endowment. If he is not, no environment, however sympathetic, can give him that. Social influence can awake only that which is latent in the artist, but it cannot make of a man intended by nature to be a scholar, an artist. This discussion, futile otherwise, helps to show that society exercises a considerable influence on Art ; what is the amount of this influence, and how it is exercised is the next point of inquiry in the next section on "the Place of Art in Life".

The Place of Art in Life. To get a general idea of the place of Art in life, let us first examine the influence of social ideals and institutions on Art, and then the reaction of Art on these,

so as to be able to appreciate the Indian conditions better when we come to deal with them.

We shall first treat historically the influence of social ideals and institutions on Art, and then analyse the mode in which it is exercised.

The first question that confronts us is, did Art arise spontaneously as self-expression of an individual? Or, did it arise out of some material necessity of the individual? In other words did it serve a purpose? There are some writers who believe that "man is so made that he responds automatically to that which he sees well done".[1] He finds pleasure in it. These people support the theory that Art arose simply as the artist's self-expression. There are others, on the contrary, who believe that Art originated, because there was need for it, because it was intended to serve a useful purpose. These seem to hold that man first traced the reindeer on the rudimentary walls of his cave dwellings, not because he thought its form elegant, nor simply to while away his time, but because he believed that a representation of that animal on his tools or dwelling would secure for him his daily food, by attracting the animal towards him.[2] It was much later that he found delight in the representation itself. Hence, the origin of Art, according to these, was due to the magic it was supposed to work.

Let us examine this Art—the earliest extant creation—for ourselves, and see if we can come to any definite conclusion. Remote in history, as far back as the Paleolithic[3] times, can be traced the first remains of Art, not merely in rudiments and crude forms, but, as we shall soon show, Art with real merit.

The lower Paleolithic age has left no work of Art, so we need refer only to the upper, or Reindeer Age. This again is divided into two periods, commencing with Aurignacian Culture, terminating with the Magdalenian, and between the two comes the Solutrian.

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[1] *Necessity of Art* Edit.: Clutton Brock, p. 77.

[2] Liquet: Chapter on *Purpose of Paleolithic Art*. The Aesthetic Theory is supported by the German[4] School. The utilitarian theory is supported by the French and asserts, "that the art of the reindeer age was not in the least disinterested. It has a practical end, and to speak precisely, was a magical operation. Primitive peoples of all religions and epochs have had the idea that the drawn representation of a being, as its evocation in a spell, gives the author of the design a power over the original."[5]

[3] The Stone Age is the oldest we know. This is divided into the Paleolithic and the Neolithic, the former being the earlier and the latter, later in time.

[4 & 5] *The Art and Religion of Fossil Man* by Liquet, p. 96.

PLATE I.

PREHISTORIC ART



Now we shall examine the Art of this age, of which that of the Magdalenian period is the best, and try and form our own conclusion.

From the remains still surviving of that period, it is evident that certain number of activities classed among the Fine Arts, probably existed in those times. Painting was known, and dancing is represented in painting.[1] Musical instruments[2] made from bones, of the nature of a lute, have been excavated. Besides caves and rock-shelters, the peoples lived in wattle huts called Hectiforms.[3] Personal decoration was being highly developed. Painting, sculpture and engraving seem to be all known ; sculpture having probably developed the earliest, predominates the Aurignacian epoch, but in the remains all three appear simultaneously.[4]

The subject matter of this Art was mostly animals, though in the Aurignacian epoch figure-sculpture, especially of female nudes, predominated. Decorative Art was used mainly for ornamentation of body and tools. The animals chiefly represented were the reindeer, horse, dog, bear, goat. Besides these, fishes, ducks and other mammals were represented.[5] Perhaps the masterpiece of animal Art is an admirable work of a neighing horse sculptured in reindeer horn from Mas d'Ayel', which reveals at once a consummate mastery of technique and an amazing rendering of expression and life.[6] So well developed was this Art that Liquet is led to suppose that professional artists were known to that society.

Perhaps the best representations of this age are in the recently-discovered Spanish caves.[7] Here is an Art, at once picturesque, human, and entirely unexpected for those early times. The style is simple yet effective, full of life and reality—really beautiful little silhouettes that deal with the rustic contemporary life.

From this survey, extremely sketchy though it be, particularly with the aid of the illustrations, it appears, that, the people who produced them had their taste and technique quite well developed. Naturally, the basic idea for their creations, the artists of the age must have found in the world around them. But it is no violence to nature to assume, that the very first attempts at reproducing what the artist saw in the world around him was not in response to an intentional purpose or belief to secure for himself a given end. Besides, Art to be used as a magical operation in itself assumes that some form of disinterested representations must have existed before

[1] to [6] *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 7, 23, 24.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

this use. For, if a reindeer was never drawn at all by any one, how could the idea arise that representation of it would work as magic? It seems to us therefore, that, some disinterested representation must have existed before this particular use (magic) was applied to Art. Hence, the view seems to be unavoidable that the first artistic efforts of man were disinterested; but that the progress and development of the original impulse must have owed a great deal to utilitarian motives. It was because Art was utilised to serve an end, that it was encouraged, its canons and technique developed, its scope extended, its place in daily life made more secure and exalted; and, as society evolved and became more and more refined, Art grew apace, each reacting on the other.

Perhaps the social purpose, sought from Art at first was the magical. Later, its decorative value became more important, later still the ritualistic significance and last of all the spiritual. Art was indeed, so closely associated with life that there are some writers who assert as an undoubted fact

> "that the result of civilisation on Art is, that the latter has been gradually drained out of the life of the people, and has ceased to be a vernacular, it was, however we may account for it."[1]

The doctrine, therefore, of "Art for Art's sake" apart from the original impulse, is a relatively new one, a modern growth, which is hardly borne out by the history of Art and of society in general.

Kaines Smith says that "an artist who works for art's sake, works in a vicious circle... To be inspired, a work must contain and seek to convey an idea—conviction is necessary to inspiration,"[2] and indeed it must be so; for without inspiration, which we have described as a vision of beauty, which puts the artist in touch with the world of spirit from which he learns new truths, there can be no Art. Once the artist has learnt a new truth, his main purpose is to give it forth to others as clearly as possible. His impressions thus receive a concrete form, and his purpose is fulfilled. Without that he could have done nothing. All life, all existence,—material and spiritual,—all experience has a purpose. Why deny to Art, which is a human activity, and one of the means of man's self-expression, a purpose? The purpose need not necessarily be what is narrowly called the 'utilitarian purpose'. In fact, Art should not have a merely commercial end, for then Art starts its own decay. The purpose may be concealed even from the artist himself who works

[1] *Necessity of Art*, p. 68.
[2] *Greek Art and National Life*, pp. 147-48.

unconscious of such a hidden motive spring. But some purpose must be there, for Art to grow and develop, and influence society in its turn.

This really is the foundation stone of the relationship between Art and Society.

As we have noted, Art is a form of self-expression for the individual. But it has also been shown that Art is a medium in which the national genius of a people may also express itself. The same may be said of a society. A society expresses itself in its Art, or rather the ideals of a society are expressed through its Art, and its institutions collectively. So long as a society is vigorous, and directs that vigour to the pursuit of high ideals, its Art (which is one form of its expression), will progress both in power of expression and in sublimity of ideas. But once a society's ideals begin to decline, or stagnate, the effect on Art will be equally disastrous. Society thus wields an important influence on Art directly, as well as forms a necessary background for its development as shown by our historical treatment.

Modes in which Society Influences Art.

The modes in which this mutual influence is exercised, are varied and not always direct. Society does not tell its artists ye shall paint thus and thus only, or ye shall write only these works and in this style. In the world's history there have been institutions and societies that have thus tried to regulate and condition the artistic impulse, and suppress individualism. The effort of the Roman Catholic Church during the Renaissance to regulate some Art forms and themes is the best example to illustrate the point. It was a futile effort to control and regulate the artist's urge for self-expression and therefore bound to fail, and resulted in a violent reaction towards the other extreme. But these direct commands and positive influences need not detain us here, for they have nowhere proved a success, and endured at all.

The chief indirect influence is exerted by Society through the person of the artist himself. For he is a social product, born and nurtured in the ideas and ideals, conventions and morality, of the society he lives in. Kaines Smith concludes his book on Greek Art and National life with the observation :

> "But the broad conclusion to which we may come, after this survey of Greek Art, is that the artist reflects the ideals of the time in which he lives."[1]

This point we need not labour more, for it has already been

[1] *Greek Art and National Life*, p. 363.

considered when dealing with the question whether the artist is a genuine creator or not.[1]

Through Social Heritage of the Artist.

The second great influence on the artist is the artistic heritage of his people and of his age, which an artist is born with and into, for which he is beholden in the ultimate analysis, to his particular society. The artistic heritage really means the sum total of the ideals of life and knowledge of Art and its technique, prevalent in that society, and the traditions and conventions based on them, for generation together. Each generation of artists is formed by this, and each new artist adds his quota to the common heritage, in the measure he is capable of giving.

The only difference between the first and this second influence is that while the former affects each individual artist and shapes his outlook on life, the latter affects rather the collective artistry of the whole society through successive generation. But the latter influence also, is felt through the person of the individual artist.

Through the Educational Factor.

The next important mode in which a society influences the artist is through the educational factor. By this is meant the education of the artist, as well as that of the connoisseurs or patrons of Art. So far as the artist's own education is concerned, this is only another phase of the first influence discussed. The latter is important, because without sympathy or appreciation from his fellow men, an artist cannot live, or give forth of his best. He, as all other human beings, likes his work to be understood and appreciated, so as to cause others to feel the delight and joy that he has himself felt, whilst producing the work. Now, how much active sympathy a society can show, and how much real Art it can appreciate and encourage, depends upon the appreciator's own Art education. Therefore the educational factor enters our discussion.

In modern times, where the education of a people is undertaken by the State, this question of aesthetic education assumes a different aspect to what it did in ancient communities, where education was largely left to private enterprise. In those societies it was mainly the artist himself who cultivated the taste of the public. This he did by flooding the public with a wealth of excellent artistic creations, thereby giving society material on which to build its taste. In this way, the public becomes imbued with artistic appreciation, and is able to appreciate nothing but the best. At times, when the idealism

[1] Cp. Ante. p. 25.

of a given society is very low, the true artist even helps to raise it by getting his own superior work appreciated. For the artist has this advantage over his fellows,

> "that if his character is so strong for good, that he can, in spite of a low level of idealism about him, conceive and express a great ideal, the worth of that work will be recognised even by those who cannot grasp its full significance; the Aphrodite of Melos stands in evidence of this truth."[1]

But even if the artist does not always succeed in elevating, he can at least always help to cultivate public taste, merely because of the physiological fact that an ounce of practical illustration is better than a pound of preaching. An artist's role in the education of his contemporaries in modern times is neither so important, nor so fully understood, as it might be ; and so Art has come to-day to be the prey of circumstances and conditions which sometimes degrade it.

Artist's Desire for Sympathy.

The artist's desire to please the public and win their sympathy need not be questioned. This is unavoidable for economic reasons. For, though the artist in him may not care for ignorant public opinion, and be satisfied by giving of his best, the man in him—for an artist is as human as any of us—craves for sympathy and understandng. Without these he starves and withers and may fade away altogether.[2] Or worse still, he may bend to circumstances, and become a mere slave of his environment, producing what the untutored mass around him demands, and so make an end of all good Art. The case of the XIX century factory architecture would alone suffice to prove this.

It is in the hands of society then to recognise its wealth, or stab genius before it is able to reach its full flight. For this reason, it is necessary to study,—as is the aim of this work—the organisation and working of a society, in so far as it consciously aids or impedes Art ; particularly through its system of education and still more through economic institutions and circumstances.

Economic Factor.

There is another and yet more potent way, in which Society indirectly but very materially influences Art. The economic factor is undoubtedly very important

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[1] Kaines Smith: *Greek Art and National Life*, p. 363.

[2] This was the fate of the genius Keats, whose sensitive soul was not able to bear the sharp darts of the unkind critics of his days, and hence his early flight from the earthly existence.

in the development of Art. For Art necessarily implies ease and leisure to the artist ; freedom from the spectre of hunger and want. Leisure, in its turn, implies a sound economic system, by which an artist's necessities are assured, without consuming all his energy in the struggle for existence. At the same time, if true Art is to flourish, the artist must not be reduced to the level of a wage-slave ; nor must he be governed entirely by commercial motives. The artist, like all other men in a community, has to make his living through his work. The ideal society must, therefore, be so organised, as to give the artist his living, and yet not degrade him from the dignity of a creator to the level of a machine. For he renders a service to the society—a service without which a society cannot claim to be civilised.

> "For what is grievous dompting, grim about our lives is that we are shut up within ourselves, with an itch to get outside ourselves." "Art is a momentary relaxation from this itching....." "The active amusements and relaxations of life, can only rest certain of our faculties, by indulging others; the whole self is never rested save through that 'unconsciousness of self' which comes through rapt contemplation of Nature or of Art."[1]

The service the artist renders must be fully recognised and adequately rewarded, like all other services rendered to society.

> "The artist contributes a necessary element in life, the value of beauty. Without it, the very being of man would be fractured, would rock and overturn. The value of beauty is supplied by God in all his works it is the stamp of the divine hand."[2]

And it is through the artist, that others are able to see "God in everything". If the artist, renders so important a service, the best way society could reward him would be to make the artist's position secure, and assure him enough leisure to develop his genius to the maximum extent. If artists are given an assured position and living, they exalt their society by ennobling its ideals, and revitalising its basic currents of thought and action. This is the ideal relationship between the artist and his society.

Various modes of appreciation.

Now let us see how various societies have tackled this problem, and with what result, beginning with our times. How is the artist paid to-day for the services he renders society, or how does society value his efforts? Society's admiration

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[1] *Inn of Tranquillity*, Galsworthy (Essay on Art).
[2] *Necessity of Art*, p. 83.

or appreciation is expressed in the money it offers him, usually through individual patronage of his Art. The more popular the artist, the more money his pictures or creations fetch.[1] His very life depends upon whether the works he produces will sell or not. Society to-day is not so organised, as collectively and automatically to encourage artists, the latter have to degrade themselves to be salesmen, and find individual purchasers for their creations. They have no definite nor assured place assigned to them in modern commercialism and hence the proverbial precariousness of artist life.

Indeed, the problem of modern Art, unlike the ancient, is that three quarters of the society in which it is produced hardly understands it, and is utterly unaffected by it. Hence Art is left hanging in the air, and artists have no recognised place in modern society. Genius is, therefore, often destroyed in the mere struggle for bare existence. Under such circumstances artists are faced with a great temptation, namely, that of prostituting their Art to please the public, however ignorant it be so as to procure means of livelihood.

What is the aesthetic equipment, claim or right of the society, which thus leaves to the tender mercies of a commercial competition to guide the artist's creations and inspiration? The one aim and object of this society is to make money. It is absorbed in that. It has no time to develop a taste of its own, and it is guided in all its likes and dislikes, not so much by well-informed and intelligent criticism, as by the hectic nature of advertisement And it is on the caprice of this society that the artist, and therefore the Art rests.[2]

Let us now glance backwards through the ages at different civilisations, where Art was highly cultivated, flourished, and artists honoured, to see if we can learn something from that study.

> "In all ancient nations, even Greece, at all times of profound spiritual activity, art existed as an activity with a purpose, an energy of the characteristic Aristotelian kind. The purpose was in no sense utilitarian, but on the other hand, a work *of art was never* thrown off into the void, like a wandering stellar fragment; it existed always in relation to some other activity, whether that of enrichment of public life in general, or that of association with architecture, or by virtue of the expression of some known ideal or inspiration."[3]

In ancient societies, Art was a national concern. A definite

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[1] Upton Sinclair: *Mammon Art.*

[2] Arnold Bennet in his two works dealing with artistic life the 'Great Adventure' a drama, and 'Buried Alive' a novel, very soundly criticises and brings to light the exact nature of interest modern English society has in Art.

[3] Casson: *XXth Century Sculpture*, p. 7.

place and importance was assigned to it; and it had a social purpose, namely, to adorn the city and beautify it, or to decorate the temple where thousands came to worship. How did these thousands express their appreciation? By delighting in the works, by enjoying the pleasure they gave, and the relief they offered from the daily routine of life. Society saw to it that the artist had not to bother about his daily needs, for they were easily assured to him. The artist's business was solely to create, to give forth of his best; and, by doing so to cultivate the taste of the public to appreciate him, and, through him, only the best Art. Admiration was expressed by conferring on the artist tasks of special importance, e.g. Phidias was asked to adorn the Parthenon, or by offering to the artist, as the Greeks did, the Crown of Olives, in itself worth nothing, but a symbol of the nation's admiration for him.

During the Renaissance of Art in Europe, the 'patrons' of Art came into existence. Artists here flourished under the patronage of Prelates or great lords, their business being to adorn churches, or decorate the mansions of their patrons. This, though assuring the artist his living at times degraded him insensibly into a flatterer of the patron who maintained him.[1]

In ancient Persia we find a similar system. Here also great noblemen had in their household artists whom they patronised and supported. But at the same time the study of Art formed a part of the syllabus of almost all the courtiers who patronised it, so that the patronage was an intelligent one, and helped to encourage and foster the right kind of Art.

When we come to Ancient India, we find the artist's independence firmly secured. As we shall show in detail later, his position was secured through a peculiar gradation of society, which was so constituted and conducted, that each man's duty was to follow his own particular vocation as given to him by birth, to the best of his ability. His wants were assured for him by the same process and regulation automatically, simply if he pursued his natural and hereditary calling. This arrangement particularly facilitated the growth of real Art, for the institution was so designed as to give the greatest amount of freedom within his particular sphere to each individual, and yet assure the highest transmission of hereditary skill, and afford the fullest opportunity.

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[1] Cp. Upton Sinclair's *Mammon Art*.

Art therefore it may truly be concluded, is affected greatly by the influence and organisation of society. In its turn Art exerts no less important an influence on society. How, let us enquire.

Art's Influence on Society. Social Critic.

Art is essentially individualistic in creation, as we have already tried to show. Its purpose—if it has another conscious purpose besides giving satisfaction to the artist's urge for expression,—is to give delight to the observer, to stimulate in him higher emotion, to give him a glimpse of the unseen and the Infinite. In this way, incidentally, Art takes upon itself the function of a social teacher as also of a social critic. This is done unconsciously, without probably the artist himself being in the least aware of it. It comes into his work, because the artist is a product of his society and time, feeling its lack, and seeking to remedy it. In the background of his poems, or pictures, the foibles and shortcomings, just as much as the longings and strivings of his society are so well delineated, that it does more good than direct criticism.[1]

Instils a love of Perfection.

A love of perfection, of harmony, is another lesson taught by true Art to mankind. For Art seeks to express ideals; and, what are ideals, but the expression of man's desire to expand himself and perfect himself? This love of perfection and harmony creates the divine fire of discontent; and people who have received this message from Art seek to reconstruct their societies so as to find that message and replace concord for discord in their social environment.

A Love of Freedom.

Art, again, harbours and nurtures a spirit of freedom. For Art to flourish, an atmosphere of freedom is essential. Where that is not found, Art teaches the members of a society to seek it, to fight for it if necessary, and win it. This is not done directly but indirectly, through preaching and teaching a love of freedom, as did Rousseau before the French Revolution when he wrote—"Man is born free, and finds himself everywhere in chains" a sentence that later became the creed of the revolutionaries.

Conclusion.

These, then, are the various ways and means by which Art and Society react on each other, making the influence of one or the other, or of both, felt in particular phases of the development of a civilisation. Art is the creation we have found of social conditions operating on the artist, and at the same time per-

[1] Drama is a form of Art that does this most easily.

forms the work unconsciously of refining society, and hence daily life through its contact with and emphasis on the beautiful. It has a subconscious function of a social reformer for the same reasons.

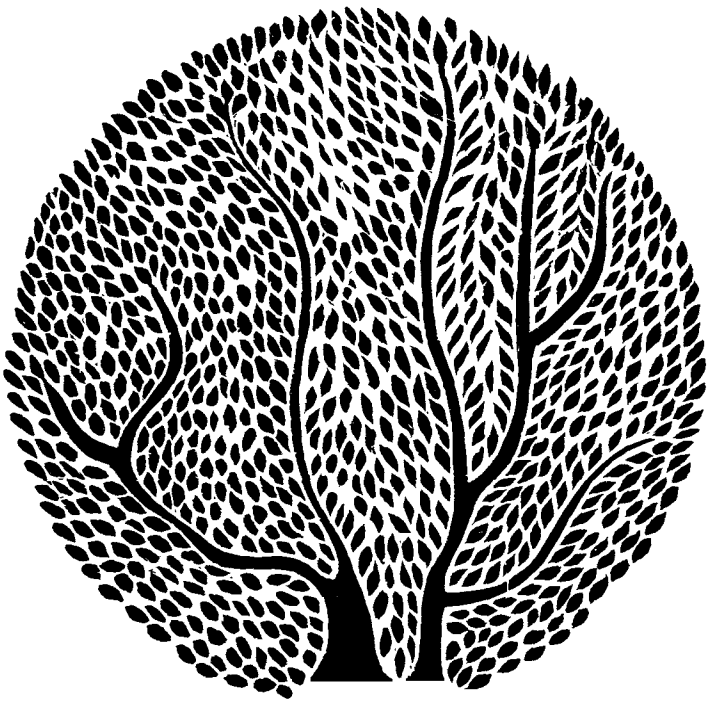
The purpose of this work is to discuss, in the light of the above reasoning, the place occupied by Art in Ancient India, and describe, as accurately as we are able, the relationship existing between the two, and their mutual influence on one another.



(Paleolithic Art)

PART II

INFLUENCES AFFECTING ART IN ANCIENT INDIA





CHAPTER III

MAIN HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"Quand on veut comprendre un art, il faut regarder
"l'âme du publique auquel il s'adressait". Taine

As the main basis of this work, let us now consider the innate abilities and tendencies forming the cultural heritage of the main races of India as far as artistic expression is concerned. In order to do this, we will have to see who these races were and where they had come from, that is glance at the historical background. It will be on this historical background that the three main chapters of this section will connect themselves. These native, inherent, cultural capacities of the Indian people have, no doubt, been worked upon by motive forces (to be studied in the next chapter) that set these inherent capacities into action, and developed these tendencies, until concrete expression of the soul of a whole people was the result. The institutions, social, political and economic that consciously or unconsciously aided this growth of Art, will be considered in the next following chapter, so as to complete our survey of the essentials that went towards fashioning the foundation of the creative genius of the Indian peoples.

We shall commence with a survey of the historical background, because "in order to understand an Art, it is necessary to examine the soul of the public to whom it addresses itself."

Mohenjodaro and Harappa in Relation to Indian Civilisation.

The early history of India is shrouded in impenetrable mist. The earliest reliable record of any kind about the Indian people is that in the *Vedas*. These are not really historical records, but flights of poetic imagination from which may be had many a vision as to the people who composed those hymns.

More substantial though less systematic, and much, much earlier than the *Vedas*, are the remains excavated at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. In fact too early to be of substantial use to us. The earliest of these are dated 4000 B. C. and the latest 2500 B. C. But one point at least is cleared, that, long before the Vedic era India was a country with a very advanced civilisation. It may indeed rank to-day with Egypt and Mesopotamia among the pioneers of civilisation.

Sir John Marshall gives the Indus Valley civilisation an independent existence, and does not make it a colony of the neighbouring Sumerian civilisation as is suggested[1] by some scholars. This hypothesis, for we can hardly call it else yet, is capable of completing the chain of the history of Indian civilisation by supplying many missing links. For instance, the origin of the Dravidians, the character of their civilisation as gleaned from the *Vedas* is yet only suggestive, but when corraborated by the finds at Mohenjodaro and Harappa, they acquire a certainty, and doubt seems to vanish from our minds. The *Vedas* tell us the Dravidians lived in fortresses, but the Cambridge History derides this as wrong translation. The massive brick constructions of the Indus Valley lend every support to the fortress theory, so that the author of the Cambridge History it may be suggested, should reconsider his opinion. The origins of every art in India is lost. When research meets each individual medium, lo ! it is there fully evolved, throwing no light on its developments at all. Here again the Indus Valley may be resorted to. There we see the beginnings of many of the arts in India. They are not crude beginnings, but promising ones, that appear to have a good future. To these beginnings, therefore, may be traced the wonderful development of Indian art whose maturity is met with in the historical ages.

Mohenjodaro is a fertile field for investigation, but none of the conjectures made above can be definitely proved. Hence productive as this may be, we cannot use it, as this chapter is for this work the basis on which the whole is to be knit ; and the basis must essentially be sound and made up of facts. The Indus Valley civilisation is still on a shaky foundation, though full of promise. We must therefore part with it, and rely on the *Vedas*, as affording material

[1] To the whole of this early civilisation he gives the denomination chalcolithic, comprising those civilisations on the banks of the Nile, Euphrates, and Indus, all independent in themselves, yet possessing considerable similarity with one another, and therefore capable of being classed as different expressions of the same process within a definite period.

admitting greater verification than the former. From them it is possible to piece together an account of their social system and cultural or artistic achievements.

Vedas Contain Earliest Account of Aryans and References to the Dravidians.

The *Vedas* are largely accounts of the invading Aryan tribes, who entered India about 1500 B. C. In them are visible glimpses of an older civilisation, already existing in the land, which the Aryans ultimately conquered. The foes that the Aryans met, in what later on came to be called Aryavarta, were, according to their own descriptions in the *Vedas* and the Epics, a fairly advanced people, who lived in towns, had mighty fortresses to defend themselves, and a well-knit social fabric that was the envy of the conquering Aryan. The *Vedas* speak of these enemies as *Dasyus*, who are identified by some later historians with the ancient Dravidians.

The Dravid civilisation is believed by many scholars today to bear a marked resemblance to the Indus and Sumerian Valley Civilisations existing round the shores of the Mediterranean. The Indian people, therefore, as we meet them first in recorded history appear to be made up of these two main stocks. The Aryan, who about 1,500 B. C. were the conquerors, and the Dravidians, with an ancient civilisation, who seem to have been in the country long before the Aryan. What and how these races contributed to the growth and development of Indian culture will form our next inquiry.

Through the *Rig Veda*, the oldest of the four *Vedas*, a record of the Aryan tribes, their cultural ideals and social system may be gleaned. In them, we see pictured a virile people, living in a well organised society with ideals and persuits of a progressive character, above the mere physical wants of life. Hence, both the opposing forces that collided against each other during the Vedic era, in Aryavarta, and waged the first recorded battles of the numbers that were to follow, were representatives of no mean civilisations. Both were advanced in their own way, in thought and organisation, had certain peculiarities of their own, and were therefore capable of influencing and benefiting each other.

Process of Cultural Contact.

As the Aryans advanced farther and farther into India, they took, as well as gave, of their social organisation, religious ideals, and cultural attainments. This was a slow and unconscious process, very difficult to trace, but evident in the result. For the culture of India as we have

it to-day is a composite entity, made up of the contribution of both these advanced races—the Aryans and the Dravids, wielded together by means of the Aryan language 'Sanskrit', and the Aryan social organisation which later developed into the Caste System.

The Dasyus or the Dravidians.

Who were these Dravidians whom the Aryans encountered at the time of their invasion? The *Dasyus* of the *Rig Veda* and the epics are identified as the Dravidians by almost all scholars who have studied the subject.[1] Very little historical data regarding them is available, from their own or independent sources. All that we know of them is through the Aryan sources, which, being the works of their enemies, are unavoidably tainted ; though, as corroborative evidence, they may serve their turn. As regards monumentary evidence, except a few cists and mounds in South India, and the relationship that might be traced with the finds at Mohenjodaro, nothing else remains. From Tamil literature of later days but referring to earlier times, and from the Aryans, we are able, however, to piece together some rough outlines and general characteristics of the Dravids and the peculiarities of what might have been their civilisation.

Vedic References to Dravids.

As already mentioned, the Dravids seem to have lived in walled towns, having stone or brick houses,[2] with advanced sanitary arrangement, similar perhaps to those at Mohenjodaro. Their main occupation centred round trading and colonising ventures, as the evidence in the *Vedas* suggest. These also testify to their skill in arts and crafts. Their wares they exchanged for the produce of foreign lands. If this be true, the theory put forward by some writers[3] that the Aryans were the real makers of Indian Civilisation, while the Dasyus were no more than ignorant savages whom the Aryans civilised, is erroneous and misleading. Besides, it is out of date now, and no serious scholar gives any weight to it.

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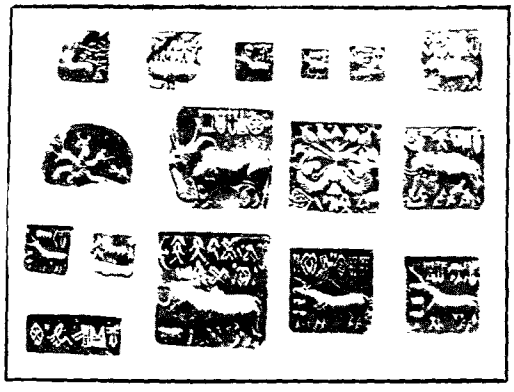
[1] Cambridge History of India: Vol. I, pp. 54-72-85. *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*—by R. C. Dutt, p. 76.
Aryans of India: Dutt M. K., p. 76.
Dravid India by S. Iyengar, pp. 22, 23.
Indian and Indonesian Art—Sect. on Aryans and Dravids by Coomaraswamy.

[2] *Cambridge History*, Vol. I, p. 42.
Coomaraswamy: *Indian and Indonesian Art*—section on Aryan and Dravids.
Sir John Marshall: *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Valley Civilisation*, Introduction.

[3] R. C. Dutt: *History of Civilisation in Ancient India.*

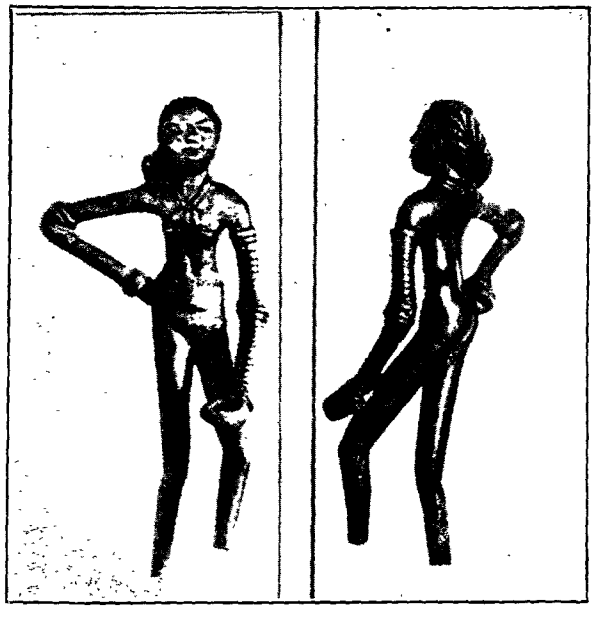
PLATE II.

MOHENJODARO AND THE INDUS VALLEY



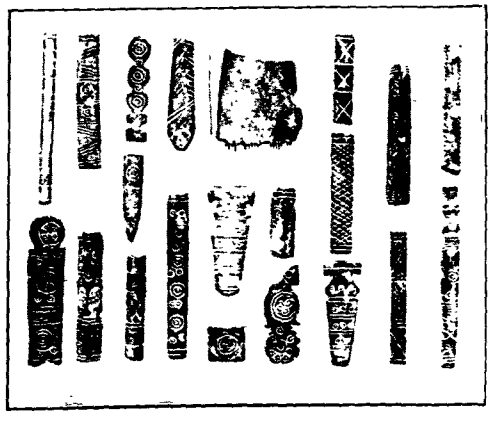
SEALS

The quality of the art considering the period should be observed. The Mohenjodaro bull is second from the left row "2".



THE DANCER

IVORY



Copyright Archaeological Survey of India

PLATE III.

MOHENJODARO AND THE INDUS VALLEY

a



b

c

d

Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.

(a) This figure from the Indus Valley suggests a marked Kinship with Egypt.

(b) This figure is said to be the "Mother Goddess" worshipped by the people. Its narrow waist, swelling hips and ornaments suggest the "embryo' of the later expression at Bharut and Sanchi.

Modern historical opinion as gathered from those who have devoted themselves to this study, e.g. T. R. Sesha Iyengar, M. K. Dutt, G. Slater, Dr. Coomaraswamy, gives the Dravidians and their contribution its just recognition and place in the development of Indian culture, and the ruins at Mohenjodaro and Harappa testify that it can scarcely be otherwise.

Who were the Dravids? And how did they come to Aryavarta.

Most scholars are nowadays agreed, that the Dravids are not aborigines in India, but emigrants, like the Aryans.[1] According to this hypothesis, the Dravids came into India by land or sea, from some Northern country probably about the 3rd or 4th millennium B. C., and finally settled in this country, cultivated its land, developed its arts and carried their civilisation to its highest pitch in the south of India. Which particular race or people of the ancient world thus made their way into India and finally became the Dravids, is a matter of controversy. There are various opinions, mutually so divergent and so contradictory, that almost every ancient race has sometime or other, by one scholar or another, been hailed as the parent of the Dravid. Hunter tells us they are a branch of the Mediterranean race, the term to be used in its widest sense.[2] T. R. Sesha Iyengar in *Dravidian India* gives about half a dozen theories as to their origin, all incorrect (Chapter II), which trace the Dravidians back to the Egyptian, South African, and Elamite origins, but ultimately concludes by giving them a Mediterranean origin. He first compares the Dravidian civilisation with that of the Indus Valley, which he finds similar to the Chalcolith ; and so concludes that the civilisation of the Dravid is akin to and part of the Mediterranean civilisation. When a branch of those people came to India, they brought their native civilisation with them into their new home, as the European peoples have done in America in our days.

> "We have endeavoured to show", he sums up, "according to many erudite scholars cited above, and the recent discoveries in the Punjab and Sindh, that the Dravidian civilisation of India bears resemblance to the culture developed in the Mediterranean area. This leads to the

[1] Some scholars trace them to be aborigines, a hypothesis which has not yet been disproved. The former theory somehow has gained complete confidence and has been accepted by most scholars on the subject. cp. *Cambridge History*, Vol. I, p. 46.

[2] Hunter: *Dravidian India*, Chpt. I.

inference that the original home of the ancient Dravidians must have been on the Mediterranean coast".[1]

The Dravids are thus traced originally to lands fringing the Mediterranean. From thence, it appears, they voyaged to India by the sea, or perhaps travelled by the Bolan pass, not less than a 1000 years before the Aryans first came into this country.[2] This explains the existence even to-day of the Brahui language—apparently of the Dravidian stock—in Baluchistan. That region must have lain on the route taken by the new comers if we assume that they entered India from the North-West. Some of their tribes may have remained there, whilst others may have sailed down the Indus, crossed over to the South-Western coast of India, and formed at first settlements, and eventually built up an empire there. That empire and the civilisation flourishing therein we know as the Dravidian. Conversely, even if they originally came to India by way of the western seas, landing first on our south-western shores, they must have penetrated in search of trade and colonies northwards and southwards, and so formed an empire, by trade and colonisation, by peaceful penetration extending from the Punjab perhaps to Kanya Kumari, from the Bolan Pass to the mouth of the Godaveri.

Description of some Essential Features of Dravid Civilisation.

This empire was a great maritime empire, depending probably on sea-borne commerce mainly, as appears from the literary evidence available. We have evidence of regular commercial intercourse carried on by sea, between South India and Western Asia, even before the 8th Century B. C.[3] The Dravidians traded with the ancient Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Jews of Solomon's days, the Assyrians, Greeks and Romans, also with China, Sumatra, Java, and the Malaya peninsula.[4] What did they trade in? If we could know, perhaps it would help us to understand something about the extent and nature of their civilisation. There are conjectures about their trade before the 8th Century B C. and evidence for trade after 8th Century B. C. Indian teak is found in the ruins of Ur, and it must have reached there from India about the 4th Millennium B. C.[5] In Egyptian tombs, dating before 1462 B. C. were found mummies wrapped in Indian Muslin, which were also supposed to have been dyed by Indian Indigo by

[1] S. Iyengar: *Dravid India*, p. 52. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 43.
[2] G. Slater: *Dravidian India*, p. 27.
[3] & [4] S. Iyengar: *Dravid India*, pp. 131-137.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 132.

some writers.[1] Indigo we know was obtained only in the Ganges valley. Hence if this evidence is good, two more facts may be established thereby ; first, the extent of the Dravid Empire, or at least the extent of their commercial hinterland, for to trade in indigo they must have in their possession, or under their sphere of influence, the valley of the Ganges about the 3rd Millennium B. C. Secondly, the art of weaving[2] must also have been known to them about the same period. Solomon is said to have got sandalwood, apes, rice, and peacocks from India. The old Hebrew word for peacock, *Tuki*, may have been derived from the Tamil *Togei*[3] as also that for rice. As regards the trade with Assyria, gold, tin, silk, pearls, spices, were all exported.[4] Perrot and Chipiez also bear testimony to the export of gold from India to Nineveh.

After the 8th Century B. C. we have an important quotation, from Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, but unfortunately the writer does not give the reference. S. Iyengar says,

> "Kautilya was of opinion that commerce with the South was of greater importance than that with the North, because the more precious commodities came from the South, while the Northern regions supplied only blankets, skins, and horses. Gold, diamonds, pearls and conch-shell are specified as products of the South."[5]

The Dravidian name for *oda*-ship, is partly Dravid, and not borrowed from Sanskrit, the writer asserts ; while the Sanskrit word for pearl seems to have been borrowed from the Dravid *Mutta*[6] its name in the land where it was found. The Greek names for rice and pepper, namely, *oryza*, *peperi*, were also from the Tamil words *arisi* and *pipali*.

> "The exports of South India to Western Roman Empire was so great that Pliny is indignant, that two million sterling of Roman money were annually swallowed by India."[7]

Our purpose here is not to reconstruct Dravidian civilisation, as that would be a difficult task if not impossible. We want only to note its general character and outstanding peculiarities. Most of the important nations of the ancient world grew into strength and maturity as powerful civilisations, by means of commerce and trade. With

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 132.
[2] Marshall: *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Valley Civilisation*, Introduction.
[3] *Dravidian India* by S. Iyengar, pp. 131-137.
[4] *Ibid.*—134.
[5] *Ibid.*—136-137. *Chanakya Arthashastra*, Book VII, Sec. 355 (S. Shastry).
[6] *Ibid.*—137.
[7] *Ibid.*—143.

trade comes prosperity, and with prosperity, very often remarkable outbursts of the intellectual, spiritual and cultural activity of a people. That probably was the case with the Dravidians too,[1] and the result may have been a very advanced civilisation, as the extent and the nature of their commerce shows, and as the bitter envy of their Aryan enemies but amply proves.

Of this once flourishing civilisation, at the advent of the Aryans, we do not know much. But we may take it to be by now an established fact, that the Dravidians must have contributed towards the growth and development of the composite Indian culture, from their vast resources. Let us now see if we can pick out, with the help of scholars, and from what has already been said, what may appear to be distinctly Dravid traits in the later and common culture of India in the historic age. That will give us some idea at least of the Dravidian elements in Indian Culture, and from that, of the nature of that civilisation and this will consequently indicate the extent of the Dravid contribution to Indian Culture.

Dravid Traits in Indian Culture.

We will discuss these possible elements of Dravid origin in Indian Culture, under various important heads, such as religion, social institutions, and so on. Dr. Coomaraswamy sums up the whole influence of Dravidian on the Indian and Aryan Culture, in the religious and social political spheres, thus :—

> "If indeed, we recognise in the Dravidians a southern race, and in the Aryan a Northern, it may well be argued, that the victory of the kingly over the tribal organisation, the gradual reception into orthodox religion of the phallus cult, and the mother goddess, and the shift from abstract symbolism to atmospheric iconography in the period of theistic and bhakti developments, mark a final victory of the conquered over the conquerors."[2]

In this province of Religion, the Dravidians' contribution is that which is stated above, plus a few other minor deities, such as the *Nagas*, the *Yakshas*, and other nature spirits that help to make the Hindu Pantheon so alive, so cosmic, and so sympathetic. While the Aryans of the North, worshipped Nature Spirits, of the wind, storm and rain ; of light, heat, sun, fire ; of health the *Ashwins*, of *Gauri*, *Ushas* (dawn) and the lord and master of all these—Indra ; the Dravidians introduced more earthly elements, that came into direct contact with man, and influenced his life immediately. Again, the worship of the Mother Goddess, which is essentially a Mediter-

[1] *Ibid.*—150.

[2] Coomaraswamy: *Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 8.

ranean trait, may have brought in its train natural reverence for woman, and the appreciation thereby of the softer side of life that woman presents. The Aryan in contrast was more virile, more hard, and less delicate or imaginative. When we add that the Dravid society seems also to have been a matriarchal one,—that is where inheritance and succession were through the female,—then the influence of woman on their social life, ideals, and activity may be better understood. Softness, refinement, an intuitive appreciation of the emotional and the beautiful, characteristics pre-eminently of woman, must have found utmost prominence in the worshippers of the Great Mother. This is in marked contrast to the Aryan worship of strength and power. Reverence for woman, and especially for the mother, has become an integral and essential part of the common culture developed in India. He who makes a woman unhappy, that family soon perishes, says *Manu*.[1] Where women are honoured, the Gods are pleased.[2] So far as honour is concerned, the *Acharya* is ten times more venerable than the *Upadhya*, the father a hundred times more than the teacher, but a mother a thousand times more than the father.[3]

Shiva, of the *Rig Veda*, is very different from the Shiva of the Shaivite revival that came from the Hinduised South in relatively recent time. Perhaps Shiva as Nataraja, and as embodied in the *Brahmanic Trimurti*, was a Dravidian conception too ! Certainly the emphasis on *Shakti* or the female principle in the Deity, the worship of Kali, Uma or the consort of Shiva, and, by analogy of the consorts of the other gods of the Trinity, may well be ascribed entirely to the Dravidian source in its origin.[4]

The early Aryans, again, we definitely know, were not image worshippers. The hymns of the *Rig Veda* declare, that the vulgar look for their gods in images. Yet, we find image-worship becoming a part not only of Brahmanism, but also of later Buddhism and Jainism, which are essentially atheistic creeds. Hence, as Coomaraswamy says, the popular Dravidian element must have played a major part in all that concerns the development and office of image-worship that is *puja* as distinct from *yagna*.

Early maritime trade, and all that had to do with shipping and the art of navigation, fishing, the use of chanek and bangles and

[1] &[2] Manu III, pp. 55-57 from *Hist. of Civ. in A. India*—R. C. Dutt.

[3] Manu II from *Hist. of Civ. in A. India*—R. C. Dutt, p. 145.

[4] It is noteworthy that the names of the principal Divine couples are pronounced so that the female takes precedence, namely, Uma-Mahesha, Radha-Krishna, Sita-Rama.

conch are all, likewise, Dravidian elements in the daily life and the culture and civilisation that developed later.[1] Trade, we have seen, was amply developed by the Dravid, and was in all probability the main cause of the Aryan hostility towards them. For trade gave them dominance, which the Aryan had no means of counterbalancing. Shipping must have been indispensable to a trading people living mainly on the seaboard. In the 6th Century B. C., a Pandya princess married Vijaya prince, the founder of the Dynasty in Ceylon. The load of the ship in which the bride and her trousseau—if we may call it so—were taken over to Ceylon, are thus described. Imagine the size of the boat that must have carried this huge cargo ! It consisted of,

> "elephants, horses, and waggons, worthy of a king, 18 officers of the state, craftsmen, and thousand families of the 18 guilds, 75 menial servants, slaves, and the princess, and 700 virgins who accompanied her."

Allowing for a possible exaggeration, the ships must have been large enough and sufficiently well constructed, even to hold a quarter of that cargo. Besides, considering the sailing that the Dravidians must have done, venturing into the stormy seas of China, the mariner's compass (or equivalent astronomical knowledge), as well as other instruments essentially connected with the science of navigation, must have very likely been known to them. Hence any references to these, or any motifs derived from them in the later art, must be regarded as being of Dravid origin.

To the Dravidians, again, are probably due those forms of architecture, which seem to be based on bamboo construction. The architecture of the Toda hut has been cited as a proto-type, or at any rate a near analogue, of the early barrel-vaulted chaitya halls, and the horse-shoe window. Curved roofs, though common in India, are rare in the world during the early ages.[3]

At the time of their arrival into Aryavarta, the Aryans had little or nothing of organised town life.[4] They were nomadic wanderers, perhaps just entering the agricultural stage of civilisation, and so seeking a home. The Dravidians at the time, were associated with well-developed industries, and leading a settled and well organised life of a great commercial civilisation. Their sway embraced many strong kingdoms. Hence, it is believed by some writers, that all

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[1] Coomaraswamy: *Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 5-6.
[2] S. Iyengar: *Dravidian India*, p. 138.
[3] Coomaraswamy: *Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 5-6.
[4] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 99.

that has to do with matters relating to land tenure, village community, government and taxation,[1] were probably also adopted by the Aryan from the Dravidians, whose mode of life they seemed to have really envied and therefore assimilated in course of time.

Mrs. Spier, in her book *Life in Ancient India* quotes a passage from the *Rig Veda*, showing that the *Dasyus* had one God of whom the Aryans were particularly terrified.

> "Let not the most powerful and indestructible Nirriti[2] destroy us. Let her perish with our evil desires"..."keep far from us Nirriti with unfriendly looks, and liberate us from whatever sin we may have committed."[3] (Rig-Veda, Vol. I, pages 62-107).

This quotation suggests some useful deductions : 'Nirritti', if a Tamil word suggests an idea similar to the Sanskrit words for Dance which may have been derived from the Tamil also. So perhaps the very art of the dance though suggested in the *Vedas*, may have been a Dravid contribution. 'Nataraja' the Prince of Dancers as applied to the God Shiva, a peculiar favourite with South India, is essentially from the South, and perhaps has the same origin. We have given some evidence later on[4] to show, that synthesis of the rhythm of dance in concrete form was best symbolised in the South.

Mr. Das in his book on the 'Educational System of the Ancient Hindoos' says, the Dravidian was no theologian, but expert in imagination and construction. Unfortunately, he gives no authorities to support this intriguing conjecture, or else he would have supported still further our remarks above.

These in brief, then, may be regarded as the Dravidian features in Indian culture. They embody the Dravidian contribution, and indicate the extent of their culture. Of course, this is not a complete or exhaustive survey, but, enough for our purpose, especially when looking to the scantiness of the material available to draw from.

The Aryans. Emigrants to this land.

We will now turn our attention to the next and most important people in Aryavarta, the conquering Aryans. That they were originally emigrants into India we have already observed. They arrived according to the accepted date, about 1500 B. C. The final blend of the Indian culture is predominantly of Aryan impress, and hence the necessity

[1] S. Iyengar: *Dravidian India*, p. 120.

[2] Has this Nirriti any affinity with the Egyptian Goddess of a similar name?

[3] Mrs. Speir: *Life in Ancient India*, p. 56.

[4] Cp. Post, page 187.

of inquiring into their origin, their life and culture ; that is, who they were, where they came from, and what they gave to the common Indian culture.

Decended from the original Aryan stock.

Most of the inhabitants of the modern world are said generally to be descended from certain original stocks, existing in the ancient world. Some of the main stocks were the Aryan, Semetic, Mongoloid, and Negroid, or African. The main distinction between these stocks was based on the similarity or otherwise of the principal physical features of each stock. The Aryans were of light complexion, sharp features, straight nose, high forehead, tall and slender in build. The Mongoloid branch is said to have yellow complexions, flat features, and heavy square builds ; and so on for the other stocks of the human race. The Aryans of the Rig Veda were the direct descendants of this original stock.

Found scattered at dawn of history, original occupied Aria as Homeland.

About the dawn of History—what date it is difficult to ascertain—the Aryans, whose offshoots now make up the bulk of the people of Europe, Persia, and India, were, owing to some reason, driven out of their original homeland[1] where they had all lived together. Where this original homeland of all the Aryan peoples was is still a debatable question. Some writers assert that theirs is an Asiatic cradle, others, a European. Max Muller thinks the original home was in Central Asia,[2] and refers to it as 'Aria'. The Carpathians were the original abode of the Aryans, according to the Cambridge History, Vol. I. Wherever it was, it is needless for us to ascertain definitely. It was in that, their original home, and before separation, that they developed the seeds of the culture which they carried with them when they emigrated to distant lands.

Owing to various reasons scattered. Indo-Iranian and Indo-European Branches.

After having left their homeland, these Aryan tribes wandered East and West in search of new pastures, and new homes. The branch that travelled East, ultimately settled, after a long ramble, in the land now known as Persia. This branch is spoken of as the Indo-Iranian branch. A section of these people, after staying in Persia, for a time, emigrated further South-eastwards, and eventually came and settled in the vales of the Sapta-Sindhu. This, they later called

[1] Dutt, M. K.: *Aryanisation of India.*
[2] Camb.: *History of Ancient India*, p. 20.

Aryavarta ; still later called Hindoostan by the Muslims. This branch is spoken of as the Indo-Aryan branch of the main Indo-European stock.

The tribes that went Westwards, settled down in different parts of the region now known as Europe. We are able to trace their descendants in the Ancient Greeks and the Romans, and in the modern Russians, Germans, and the Anglo-Saxon nations who have in modern times colonised America and Australasia. When we come down to historical times, therefore, we find branches of this race scatterel in all the different parts of the world, so mixed up with the aborigines, and changed by their surrounding local environment, as to leave very few common traits, by which their descendants could be distinguished as originally of one stock.

Superiority of the culture of these Tribes.

Nevertheless, in all the races descended from the common Aryan stock, one observes a degree of cultural development, far in advance of the peoples of other stocks. This leads one to the presumption, that the Aryans were intellectually superior to most of the other races of the Ancient world. Hearn speaks thus of them,

> "The family of the nations of which I write is confessedly the foremost in the world. Its history is more glorious, its renown is more diffused, its progress in science and in arts is more advanced, its religion more pure, its politics and its law are more beneficial and more just, than those which prevail elsewhere upon earth."[1]

It is because of this advancement shown by the Aryan branches, and the heights to which they had reached, that some historians have held that the Aryans, even before they left their original homeland, had reached a particular stage of advancement, which later became the common cultural heritage of all the peoples descended from this stock. Scholars have come to this conclusion through the use of two methods. The first is that of comparative philology, and the second is through the method of linguistic palaeontology.[2]

Observing a similarity in their ethnology, as well as in mythology between the races descended from the original Aryan stock, scholars began to study the languages of these peoples to see if they could get linguistic evidence to bear out the relationship. By taking the words which occur in similar sense and form in several Indo-European languages, duly transformed in accordance with

[1] Hearne, W. E.: *Aryan Household*, p. 1.
[2] Childe, V. G.: *Aryans*, p. 80.

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the phonetic laws, they have arrived at what they call the surviving vocabulary of the original Aryans. From this vocabulary they have tried to reconstruct the civilisation the Aryans had developed in their original homeland, called Aria, by Max Muller, before they scattered to the different ends of the globe.[1]

Aryan Heritage reconstructed by various methods.

Here are some of the conclusions arrived at by these students. Before separation the Aryans had reached the Neolithic, or the new stone age, and were acquainted with copper. In their religious beliefs, they had come to worship nature forces, more or less personified as celestial beings. According to sociologists like Perry and Frazer, the personified Sky Father is the mark of a relatively advanced stage of intellectual development. The Aryan social structure likewise betokens an equally advanced stage of cultural evolution. They seem to have evolved a social order of gradations, which, in the various Aryan peoples, took and now survives in different forms. This grading we find peculiar to all races of Aryan origin.[2] In India it has taken the form of Caste, in Europe was evolved the Feudal system out of the Roman Patrician, and Plebs. The Greeks and the Persians, other branches of the same stock, also had their similar social divisions, on basis or in forms suited to their own particular need. But, the germ, or seed, resulting in such social gradation, seems to be common to all Aryan people.

The common Aryan society had reached the patriarchal and patrilinear stage, which shows a progressive evolution in their family life. Domestication of animals, such as dog, cattle, horses, sheep, goats, swine, was known to them, as also the breeding of these. Cattle was regarded as the principal source of wealth. In short,

> "the Aryans were no longer just food-gatherers, or even pure nomad herdsmen, but people who had already made distinct progress in the arts, as in their political organisation and religious beliefs."[3]

Rig-Vedic Society even more advanced.

This basic culture and social ideas form the Aryan heritage, common for all races descended from this stock. This, the Indo-Aryans must have brought with them to the vales of the *Sapta Sindhu*, which they made their home. It is the basis of their culture

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 82-87.
[2] M. K. Dutt: *Aryans of India.*
[3] Childe, V. G.: *The Aryans.*

found in the *Rig-Veda*, the earliest of the *Vedas*, a purely Aryan creation on Indian soil. Before describing the *Rig-Vedic* culture, as being the Aryan contribution to the Indian culture of later days, let us explain the difference between the common or original Aryan culture, and that discernible in the *Rig-Veda*.

Reasons: It must not be forgotten that the Indo-Aryan branch, in its journey from Asia to Aryavarta, must very probably have passed through, and come into contact with, some of the great civilisations of the ancient world. For, if we accept the date of their departure from their original home to be round about 2500 B.C., then it must have been in the heyday of the Mesopotamian, the Sumerian, and the Egyptian civilisations. The Aryans, while passing through these lands, must have added to their existing store of knowledge by assimilation from the richer and more advanced cultures they met *en route*, till finally they reached the plains of the *Sapta Sindhu*, having thereby attained a more advanced stage of civilisation, than that they had left Aria with. It is this new culture and social basis which they had attained at the time of their advent into Aryavarta, that we meet with in the *Rig-Veda*.

Rig-Veda Society described. According to the hymns of the *Rig-Veda*, the Aryans were a fair, hardy, and tall race in build. Their main occupation at the time seems to have been agriculture, though their chief pre-occupation was naturally fighting, and therefore they idealised virile strength. Like their cousins the Greeks, they were the worshippers of manly strength, and physical beauty, as revealed in a perfect physique, so necessary for the strenuous existence they were compelled to lead.

They seem to have reached a stage of social evolution, when the family becomes a more important unit than the tribe.[1] This well-marked stage in social evolution is considered to be more advanced, than when the tribe is the important factor, as seems to have been the case in the original homeland of the Aryans. The head of the family was the father, and the patriarchal system prevailed.[2] All inheritance and succession was through the male, and a son was the main desire of a married couple.

Only two social divisions seem to be recognised in the days when the Rigs were young, namely, the Aryan and the Non-Aryan. This is known as the beginning of the *Varna*[3] that is colour distinction.

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[1] R. C. Dutt: *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, p. 45.
[2] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, pp. 88 and 90.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

The Aryans themselves were grouped *inter se* occupationally into the priests who performed the sacrifices and chanted the hymns of the Rig-Veda ; the warriors who defended the entire Aryan host ; and, lastly, the tillers of the soil, respectively known as the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas.[1] There was no such hard and fast distinction between these classes as now recognised between the Castes of India. It was only a division of convenience which at need could be easily overlooked. No exclusiveness entered into it. The head of the household in those days was generally a warrior, priest, and cultivator all combined,[2] and probably most adult Aryans were both priests and warriors whenever occasion arose to defend their home or to extend their sway.

Woman had a definite place assigned to her in the Aryan social organisation, both as a mother and as a wife, but not as an individual, exceptional cases apart.[3] Certain sacrifices could not be performed unless man and wife were there together. Such sacrifices were no doubt very important in the family and the communal or public life. Hence marriage was a necessity. Yet women, who had sufficient individuality to seek a vocation for themselves, were recognised and given their due place,

> "Still more charming" says R. C. Dutt "is the picture of women who themselves acted as rishis and composed hymns, and performed sacrifices like men. Lady Viswavara was such a one; a pious lady, who composed hymns and performed sacrifices".

Religion. The Aryans were Nature worshippers even in their original homes, and the Indo-Aryans of the Vedic age were particularly so. The hymns of the Rig-Veda are addressed to the powers of Nature, such as Surya (light), Agni (fire), Ushas (dawn), Marut (wind) Ashwins (health) etc.

These the Aryans worshipped ; to them they offered sacrifices, and in their honour sang their melodious hymns. But all through this nature worship we are able to trace the great Rishi Seers boldly grappling with the deeper mysteries of life and nature.[4] Passages such as the one below show that the thinkers of the age recognised the 'One' behind this cosmic display.

> "He who is the creator of all is great; He creates and supports all. He is alone all, and sees all. He is beyond the seat of the seven Rishis"

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 92.

[2] Dutt: *History of Aryan Civilisation*, pp. 95-96.

[3] The Vedic female deities Ushas, the Goddess of Dawn, and Vac, the Goddess of Speech, seem to have been single females occupying a high place in the pantheon.

[4] R. C. Dutt: *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, p. 113.

proclaimed one of the Rishis of the Vedic days. Another says,

> "You cannot comprehend Him, who has created all this. He is incomprehensible to your mind. People make guesses, being shrouded in a mist; they take their food for the support of their lives and utter hymns and wander about."

From these verses, it is obvious that the Rishis saw far beyond what could be meant merely by the apparent Nature worship, though the mass of the people must have scarcely appreciated this profound thought.

Artistic Achievement of the Age.

The artistic achievements of the age, and the tendency of the people towards artistry are more difficult to determine. Fergusson tells us that the Aryans were essentially a non-artistic race, and so the cultivation of the arts in India, was left to the Turanian races.[1]

To support this view, we have another testimony.

> "The pure spiritual knowledge of the Aryans, mingling with the Dravidians emotional nature and power of aesthetic creation, formed a marvellous compound which was neither Aryan or non-Aryan but Hindu."[2]

This writer also gives the Dravidians the credit for the development of aesthetics in India.

In contradiction to these, we have the Vedas themselves and the authority of men like Havel, Coomaraswamy, R. C. Dutt, etc., who do not accept this view.

> "The Vedic Aryans seem to be proficient in carpentry, in building houses, racing in chariots of wood, and in using gold jewellery. In all probability, early Aryan art was decorative, or more accurately abstract and symbolical."[3]

Were the Aryans an Artistic People?

Besides, however, the Vedas and the evidences of the Aryan language—Sanskrit—we have no remains of any other artistic expression of the Vedic Aryans. Can we then say whether the Aryans were at all an artistic race? The Rig-Vedic hymns themselves are, as already stated, enough to show the artistic temperament and vivid imagination of the people who created and used them.[4] The

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[1] Fergussion: *Indian and Eastern Architecture*, p. 2.

[2] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 3.

[3] Coomaraswamy: *Indian and Indonesian Art*, section on Aryans and Dravids.

[4] "The primitive religion of the Aryan was suggested by whatever was beautiful and striking in Nature. The sky, or the bright sky was an eternal object of wonder and worship. The Sun, the Dawn, the Fire, and the Earth, the Storms and the Clouds and the Thunder, all received their worship.

exquisite imagery, the apt similies used, the wide range of the natural phenomena observed, especially their beauty that seemed to enchant them, must be taken to be sufficient evidence of the native artistry of those people. The hymns addressed to 'Ushas' and 'Agni' are typical examples of the type we have mentioned.

The language itself in which these hymns were composed was essentially a musical language. If it was ever used in daily life in the forms in which it occurs in the hymns, it must have accustomed the people speaking it, to a musical sense and ear, and so developing their sense of music. In a later chapter, we have attempted to show how it is possible, from the Vedic ritual, to trace the origin of almost every fine art known to the ancient Indian, and so we shall say no more on that point here.

Rig-Vedic age sees the birth of Indian Art Philosophy.

As for concrete remains, all early works of Art, we know, were done in impermanent material. Hence that may be the reason why we have no remains of the times before the *Rig-Veda*, or even from that period. The absence of these alone do not suffice to prove that the Aryans were lacking in artistic genius. Havel explains this lack rather differently, and better. His main thesis is, that the Vedic period was a period of inspiration, when the Art philosophy, which was such an essential element of the later Indian Art, was yet developing. The main artistic ideals and motifs that took concrete form later were then in 'embryo', being born. Hence it is no wonder that we have now surviving no definite, concrete artistic creations of that age, except the innate beauty of the hymns themselves, their native poetry and natural music.[1]

Among less happy nations, religion began with the dread of diseases and of evils, as these made the most lasting impression on the mind. But among the Aryans, the brighter and the pleasanter aspects of Nature the bright sky, the flushing dawn, the rising Sun, and the glowing fire, created the deepest impressions, and called forth songs of gratitude praise and worship."

R. C. Dutt: *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, pp.47, 50.

[1] "We must fully understand that the motive forces which are behind all Art creations often exist in full strength, long before Art finds concrete visible expression in literature and what may be called the fine Arts".

"Indian art was conceived when that wonderful intuition flashed upon the Indian mind that the soul of man is eternal and one with the Supreme Soul, the Lord and Cause of all things and the creative force generated from those great philosophical conceptions has not ceased to stimulate the whole art of Asia from that time to the present day."

Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, pp. 9-10.

It was the Vedic poet, then, who first proclaimed the identity of the soul of man with the soul of Nature, and laid claim to direct inspiration from God. The idea of the artist identifying himself with Nature in all her moods, is really the key-note of all Asiatic Art, poetry and music.[1] This philosophy was predominantly the creation of the Aryans, and really their most important contribution to India's art history ; for their whole ritual of worship and conception of sacrifice were based on this ideal.

Hence, this age must be regarded as one of wonderful artistic richness, says Havel,[2] in spite of the fact that it has left no concrete monuments of its work, other than the hymns, and the sympathetic language in which they are expressed. Besides, the hymns give evidence that the elaborate rites of the Vedic ritual called forth the highest skill of decorative art or craftmanship. But the vision of the Vedic seers only materialised into the wonderful sculpture and painting of the greatest period of Indian art before the Mahommedan Invasion.[3]

Vedic and Classical Sanskrit.

So much with regard to the artistic contribution of the Aryans of the Vedic age. The hymns of the Vedas are themselves an artistic expression, and in them we see incipient the Art philosophy of India, vaguely embodied, evolving the ideals and motifs which later took form. We have very often referred to the language of the Rig-Veda, which though not the classical Sanskrit, is the basis from which classical Sanskrit developed. This language, therefore, must be taken to be an unforgetable gift that the ancient Aryans have made to the growth and progress of Indian culture. In it are embedded the germ of all the music and literary beauty of a later date ; and in its daughter, the classical Sanskrit, are preserved all the scientific and philosophical works which were written as civilisation progressed in Aryavarta. Through the language, therefore, we see one aspect of the synthesised culture of the Aryans and Dravidians. The other aspect is evident through the arts that developed later on.

Its Contribution in Culture.

From the classical Sanskrit have descended most of the modern languages and dialects of Northern India, and it has deeply coloured, if not inspired, the literature of South India. So wonderfully had this

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[3] Whole passage an adaptation from Ideals of Indian Art. Section on "Vedic India".

language developed, that the most sensitive and delicate expressions, the most intricate and complex ideas, the most subtle shades of meaning, were expressed with such brevity and precision that they baffle all translators.

Other striking Aryan Features in Indian Culture.

Another striking Aryan feature in the later Indian culture, which is with equal force apparent even to-day, is the graded social order they introduced, which in course of time developed into the modern Caste System. Of this we will not say much here, since we shall have to treat it fully in the later chapters, especially the one dealing with the "Institutions of Ancient India". We need only emphasise here, that this is an Aryan feature, still exerting its full influence as in the past on modern life and conditions too, and that it has played a considerable part in the growth of Indian Art and civilisation.

These then, are the contributions of the two principal races that formed the bulk of the ancient Indian peoples. Though distinguishable in origin and elements, it has in course of time, been so mixed up, that the foregoing analysis must be regarded as being only for the sake of fundamental explanation of the nature and origin of our culture. Besides these, there were the still more ancient aborigines of India, represented perhaps by the Gonds and the Bhils to-day, who must have been in the land ages before the Dravidian even entered it. But of them we hardly know anything, and so shall say no more about them.

After the Aryan advent, we have two other races, the Scythians and the Huns, entering ancient India before the Mohemmadans. But these races were so completely absorbed and Indianised, as hardly to leave a distinct trace of themselves. We need not, therefore discuss their contribution to Indian culture either.

Nature and extent of resulting Amalgamation of Aryan and Dravid Culture.

Of the culture that grew in Aryavarta as the two important races, the Aryan and the Dravidian amalgamated, we need say very little here, since this whole Thesis is devoted to that subject. We may here append only a few quotations to show the extent of the composite civilisation, "Whatever sphere of the human mind you may select for your especial study", says Max Müller

> "whether it be the language or religion, or mythology, or philosophy, whether it be law or customs, primitive art or primitive science, everywhere you have to go to India, whether you like it or not, because

some of the most valuable and instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India and India only."[1]

Sir Thomas Munro, a man of a later date than our period who was in India and had seen it in its decline perhaps, speaks thus of his times. If such an opinion may be expressed of a country in its decline, what must have been its civilisation in its glory, we will leave for the imagination to picture. Sir Thomas Munro was asked if he thought the civilisation of the Hindus would be promoted by trade with England, and this was part of his answer relevant for us.

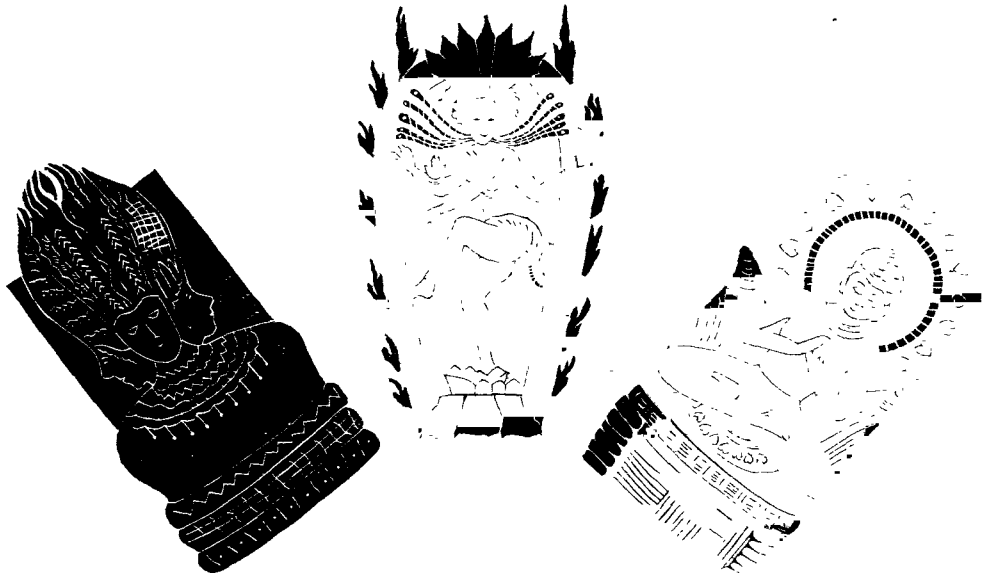
"I do not understand what is meant by the civilisation of the Hindoos.....If a good system of agriculture, unrivalled manufacturing skill, a capacity to produce whatever can contribute to luxury and conveniences; schools established in every village, teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, the general practice of hospitality, and charity amongst one another, and above all, a treatment of the female sex, full of confidence, respect and delicacy, are amongst the signs which denote a civilised people, then the Hindoos are not inferior to the nations of Europe; and if civilisation is to become an article of trade between the two countries, I am convinced that this country (England) will gain by the import cargo."[2]

The first quotation gives us the extent of the civilisation, the second an idea of its nature and intensity. The following pages will, it is hoped, serve to show partially at least, how rich, varied and wonderful was the compound we are about to unfold.

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[1] Max Müller: *India what it can teach us through centuries*, p. 15.
[2] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 451.





CHAPTER IV

MOTIVE FORCES IN ANCIENT INDIA

While each individual in a society is, no doubt, actuated by his own particular urge at a given moment, we may nevertheless distinguish certain generic forces common to a given community living under the same conditions, and which continue to operate for centuries together. These motive forces supply the driving power or force, with the aid of which civilisation advances. What were the forces then, that aided the march of the Indian Civilisation?

Main Motive Forces in Ancient India.

The principal motive forces affecting life in Ancient India are the Religious and Economic. The former include social ideals too, for, in India, these spring out of the people's religious instinct, and develop along with it, as we shall presently show.

> "Religion and Art" says Anesaki "are two of the most potent factors of human life... . Religion gives mankind a new life: it is an inspiration to the vigorous, and a consolation to the weak; it incites man to activity, even to the risk of death, but it also pacifies him, and transforms the wolf into a lamb: Religious faith has inevitably found expression in Art, which in turn has derived the inspiration of its highest achievements from religion."[1]

[1] Anesaki: *Buddhist Art in relation to its Ideals*, p. 7.

Art and Religion. Religious faith has invariably found expression in Art, this writer asserts. Why? The reason is that for the average human beings, religion means something that they can cling to, and from which they can derive comfort against sorrow and anguish in their moments of distress. Religion may have arisen in response mainly to this desire, which is really no more than the instinct of fear of the unknown working itself out. Fearing the powers of Nature, primitive man invested them with a personality that he believed needed propitiation. Thus arose primitive religion in the form of worship of the unknown, expressed through ritual and sacrifices. As man's mind began to grasp some of the secrets of life and solve some of the mysteries of the Universe, he began to conceive of a unity behind all the varieties of natural phenomena, and the idea of a Godhead, superior to all the deified powers of nature, emerges. On this new realisation are showered all the adoration and worship that went formerly to the local deities. It is this spirit of adoration of the unknown powers of the Universe, which when refined, becomes idealisation, and links Art to Religion

The mass of the people are never satisfied with the idea of an abstract God or godhead. They want concrete symbols by which to understand and adore the ideal of Divinity, and these can only be given with the aid of Art. Hence, this is one of the reasons why religious faith has invariably found concrete expression in Art. With the growth almost of every religion, arises a desire on the part of its devotees to spread the Light to the ignorant, to use modern Christian phraseology. Art offers about the simplest means, by which this propagation may be easily carried. Because, to learn through Art is to learn intuitively,[1] so that all men, even the masses may be appealed to with Art. These are then the reasons why religions all over the world invariably found it necessary to express themselves through Art.

As we have shown, Art is a mode of individual, as well as social self expression.[2] It expresses the ideals of an individual as well as of a society; and these ideals are generally supplied by religion taken in the widest sense. In its broadest sense, Religion seeks to explain the inexplicable, and to harmonise the Ideal with the Real, which man, finds otherwise increasingly difficult to achieve. By the flash of a word or the charm of a note Art does the same without the burden of philosophical analysis. The artist is a Seer even more than

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[1] Croce: *Aesthetics*, p. 1.

[2] cp-ante: pp. 10, 11, 12.

the Prophet ; but his vision is embodied in the real and the concrete, which is yet intended to transcend into the invisible and inexplicable.

Unlike Religion, Art gives us the concretisation of each individual effort to explain the inexplicable ; whilst Religion itself is the combined result of the efforts of a society, to transcend beyond matter, into the spirit of things. In that sense, also, it may be said religious faith or ideals invariably find, and have found expression in Art.

As a motive force Religion enters into, and affects life in various ways, reaching into all the strata of society. Through its philosophies, it influences the learned, and stimulates them to further research into the secrets of nature. By its spirituality and idealism, it inspires the artists, and colours the Art of the age ; and lastly, with the aid of ceremonies and rituals, it affects the daily life of the masses, who look upon these as a creed, and follow the rituals implicitly. Art comes into religion first as an accessory, and stays there as an accomplice as well as an interpreter. For the more subtle and refined a religion becomes, the greater is its need for concrete expression and symbolic interpretation. The religious ritual affords scope to the Arts to find their way into the religious fold ; and in so far as religious ritual is closely connected with the daily avocations of the people, it brings Art,—once it has been accepted into the religious sphere and sanctified,—into intimate relation with daily life.

This is a very sketchy review of Art and Religion, and a brief explanation of the relation between the two. It was needed to explain more fully the progress of Art and Religion in Ancient India.

How Religion arose in India, it is impossible to determine. Suffice it to say, for our purpose that ever since recorded history began, it seems to have been a potent force with the Aryan race, and has impressed its mark on almost every branch of its civilisation.[1] Indian civilisation, has therefore, been characterised as a religious civilisation. Religion has to a great extent been its originating impulse, its guiding inspiration, and is still, up to the present day, a living factor in the lives of its people.[2]

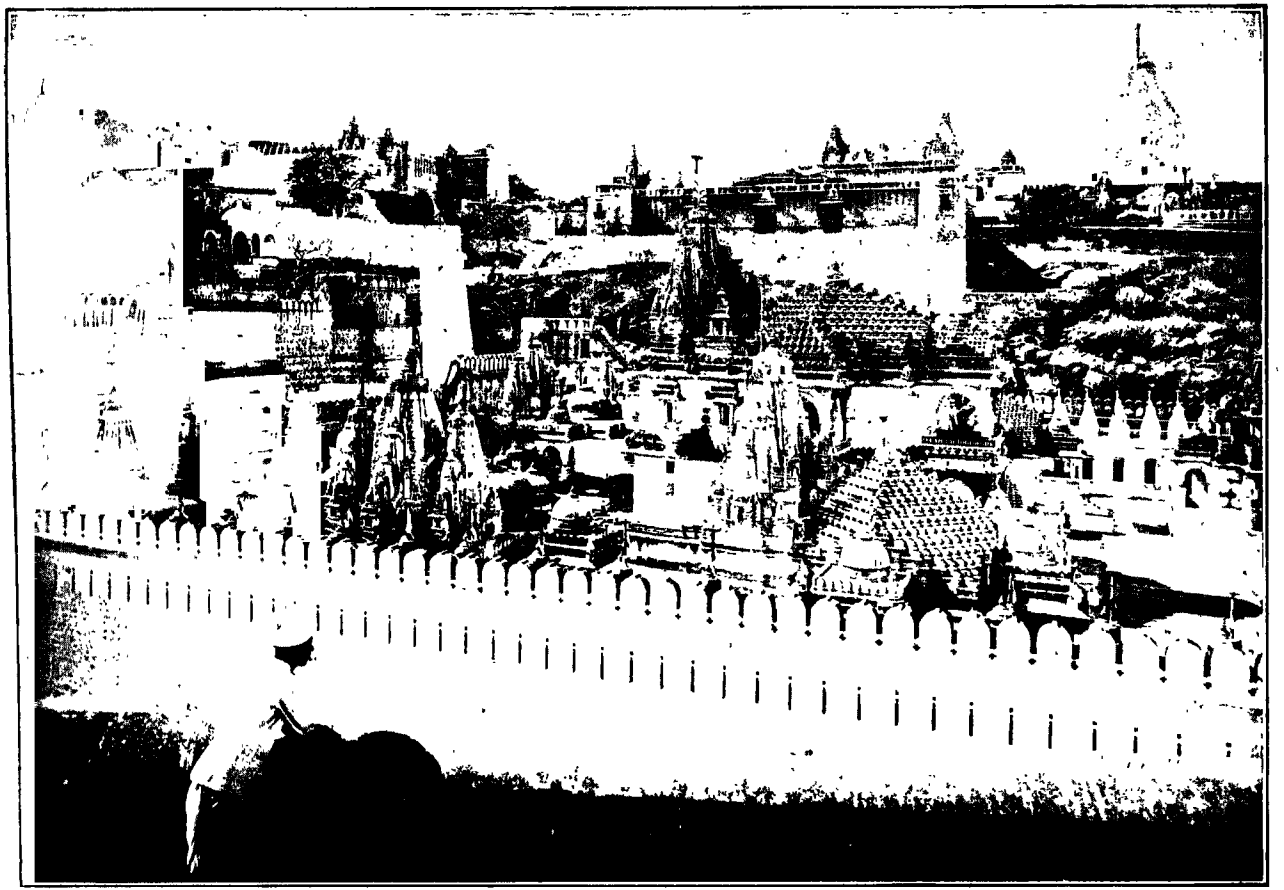
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[1] *Theory of Government in Ancient India* by Beni Prasad p. 3 and *Hindu View of Life* by Radhakrishnan, p. 12.

[2] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, pp. 2-3 and 108.

PLATE IV

PALITANA



THE TEMPLE-CITY OF THE JAINS

PLATE V.

MOUNT ABU



DILWARA TEMPLES

By courtesy: J. C. Daruvala.

Marble-carved shrines on the crest of the hills of Mt. Abu

Main Religions in Aryavarta and their Relationship.

The three main religions known to the people of ancient India were Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism. Brahmanism seems to be the oldest religion in India, and originated in the Vedic faith we have outlined already.[1] In this Vedic faith were slowly absorbed the gods and goddesses of the Dravidians and the aborigines ; and in the Vedic ritual were embodied the ceremonies and rituals of the other races of India. The original Vedic faith seems to have been transmuted, in very early times, into Brahmanism as history has known it. Ever since its origin, Brahmanism has been the most important religion in India, except perhaps while Buddhism was at its height ; and has naturally had a proportionate influence on the life and Art of the people.

Both Jainism and Buddhism, are believed to have arisen as a revolt against the increasing tendency in Brahmanism to make ritual, ceremony and sacrifice all important, forgetting their real purpose. Both these faiths based most of their philosophy on ideas common at the time in Aryavarta. They emphasised some of the finer aspects of Brahmanism, and added some new ideals of their own. Thus, they emphasised the importance of the essence, the spirit, or the soul, or of good thoughts, in contradiction to meaningless ritualism of Brahmanic worship. They seemed to be religions of the soul rather than of the world, of the individual rather than of the community, as Brahmanism tended more and more to be.

Jainism is claimed by its followers to be a very ancient religion, much older than the Buddhist faith. But it came into prominence, or was re-asserted, by Mahavira, about the same time that Gautama Buddha propounded the tenets of Buddhism.

There is between these two sister cults a great deal that is similar, and a little that is different. The difference mainly centres round the ultimate destiny of the individual soul, which they both recognise exists. The Buddhists believe in "Nirvana" or "ceasing to be" after the earthly cycles of birth and death are complete. The Jains do not believe in the complete annihilation of the individual self as the Buddhist do ; nor do they believe in the losing of one's individuality in the rhythm of things, or in a greater unity from which individual life had originated, and to which it returns, after fulfilling its obligation on earth ; that is, as Brahmanic pantheism implied in 'Moksha' the end of existence.[2] The Jains, like the Brahmans,

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[1] cp-ante: pp. 50-55.

[2] Radhakrishnan: *Hindu View of Life*, p. 63.

believe in a stage of Emancipation after the completion of earthly cycles of rebirth, but this Emancipation differs from the Brahmanic in that, the individuality of a living being is, according to the Jains never merged into a Unity. It never became an integral part of a bigger whole, or attained 'Brahman' ; but retained its separate individuality as an Emancipated and perfected being.

This is the main difference between the Jains and the Buddhists. Otherwise, both may be termed atheistic as against the sickening polytheism of popular Brahmanism of their days. Both are religions of mercy, in contrast with the Brahmanic emphasis on sacrifice ; of thought and ideal, in contrast with the Brahmanic belief in action and ritual. Animal slaughter of any sort is completely forbidden by both, and the Jains at times carry this tenet so far, that they cover their mouths and noses with very fine cloth, to save the bacterial organisms in the air. Again, they were both asocial, making a complete divorce between social life and its requirements, from spiritual concern, as against the predominently secular outlook of Brahmanism. To quit the world, and rid oneself of earthly ties taking on the life of a monk, and spending it in the penance, prayer, service, or meditation, is the shortest way to Nirvana or the end of existence, according to the Jains and the Buddhists. Therefore, they separate secular life from spiritual life, a life of enjoyment (*Bhoga*) from a life of renunciation (*Tyaga*) in which the pleasures of the flesh and senses are denied.

Brahmanism, as we shall explain in its due place clearly, had a very different view of life. It provided for all the various desires, physical as well as spiritual, of a man's being and nature. It held all forms of living and all expressions of individuality, as sacred and necessary for progress and evolution. Leaving the world, for a life of the recluse, though not forbidden, was not to be undertaken, unless the person was sufficiently ready and qualified for it, and had fulfilled his obligation in life as child, youth and adult citizen.

These then are some of the similarities, and differences between the three main religions of Aryavarta. The rest of the chapter deals with each religion by itself, and after giving a short account of its growth and development, and a brief survey of its ideals and beliefs, shows the influence of these ideals on life and society ; and finally considers the effects of these on the general outlook on Art, in order to see whether they consciously or unconsciously aided or retarded the development of artistic expression.

For a proper appreciation of these three religions, let us first

take the two branches of the main philosophy, Buddhism and Jainism, and then come to the parent stock. The earliest remains of Art that we have, apart from the Vedas, are nearly all Buddhist, and to a smaller extent Jain. Brahmanic remains are of a much later date. This consideration makes it more desirable that we should treat the religions in their reverse historical order, taking Buddhism first, Jainism second, and Brahmanism last.

Buddhism. Rise and Growth.

Out of the ruling house of the Sakya tribe at Kapilavastu, arose Prince Siddhartha. His birth was heralded by prophecies that he would be the saviour of mankind. As a child and youth Siddhartha was easily the first of his fellows, fair, brave and accomplished incomparably above all his contemporaries. But even as a young prince of a warrior clan, his heart was overflowing with compassion for all living things ; and though his parents, frightened by his unworldliness, strove to chain him to the chariot of worldly life by the bonds of love and marriage, his soul could not remain in peace while misery and death were the daily portion of all life around him. One night, while the whole household was asleep, and dreaming about the heir that was just born to the Prince, he himself lay awake, pondering over the mysteries of the Universe, and the end of human misery and suffering. Suddenly, there dawned upon him the thought that such problems could not be meditated upon or solved within the luxury of his palace at Kapilavastu. Acting on this impulse, he decided to leave all his worldly wealth and connections. With a last look at his wife and newly born heir, he left for ever the home of his fathers, and took upon himself the search for knowledge to solve the problem of human suffering.

Year after year he spent wandering and meditating in ceaseless persuit for an answer to his queries. One day, while sitting under the *Pipal* tree at Gaya, the solution flashed upon him. Nirvana, or *ceasing to be*, was the way to get freedom from misery. As this truth flashed upon him, he was reborn, and became the Buddha or the Enlightened One.

To keep this knowledge to himself was impossible ; and so to spread this message to humanity became his unavoidable mission for the rest of his life ; and thus Gautama Buddha commenced his career as a preacher, and at the Deerpark in Benares he set the 'Wheel of Law' into motion. The creed he preached was Buddhism. His efforts appear to have succeeded so thoroughly that within a short space of time. Buddhism could claim large masses of people,

and several royal princes like King Bimbisara, as its adherents. But, so far, it was a local creed.

Two hundred years after Buddha's death, with the Emperor Asoka, Buddhism entered upon a new and glorious epoch. Asoka embraced this faith early in his life ; his conversion was an event of great importance for the Indian civilisation. He was the master of all Aryavarta, from Kabul and Nepal right down to Mysore, and with his conversion Buddhism became the court religion and therefore the state's. He did all that Imperial might could do to propagate the creed of the Buddha far and wide. Yet he was no intolerant bigot, as his edicts clearly show.[1] During his reign and after, Buddhism extended,

> "in due course as far West as Epirus and Cyrene, and as far East as Japan. From the 3rd Century before, to the 4th Century after Christ, Buddhism was the predominant, although never the sole Indian religion, in possession of enormous influence exercised by a disciplined heirarchy, and supported by the immense wealth of innumerable monastic foundations."[2]

The Principal Ideals and Beliefs.

As a moralist, Vincent Smith says, Buddha taught a system of lofty ethics.[3] Let us see what there was in this religion that endeared itself to the hearts of so many different peoples.

Nirvana.

The end of life, or, the purpose of existence, was, in this new creed, to attain Nirvana, which meant ceasing to be, or the annihilation of the individual self. It was this goal, and this alone, that could deliver all living beings from the cycle of pain and suffering. In order to attain this end, certain ideals had to be realised and lived up to ; one of these ideals of the Buddhist faith consists in realising, through spiritual experience and in moral acts, the continuity of life in man and nature, and the fellowship of all beings.[4] This was part of the knowledge revealed to the Buddha at Gaya, where he sat meditating under the *pipal tree*. Man, nature and animals, all come within the sphere of the fellowship established by this faith. Supernatural beings also form part of this spiritual communion, as is seen in the early carvings, which, for the most part represents assemblies of believers before the Buddha ; a concrete manifestation, we may say, of the Buddhist ideal of spiritual communion The relief sculptures of Bharhut, Sanchi and Amaravati

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[1] Grouisset: *India* (from *Civilisation of East*) series, pp. 82 and 85.
[2] V. A. Smith: *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, p. 9.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[4] Anasaki: *Buddhist Art*, p. 2.

are full of these representative assemblies, and the fact that the sculptors chose and worked on this particular aspect shows the inspiring effect of the ideal upon their artistic genius [1] Flowers and animals, says the same writer,[2] perhaps in no other religion are treated with such intimacy, as in Buddhism, not only in the way of similies, but also in concrete manifestation of tender sympathy.

Charity and Service. Another ideal of Buddhism is that of charity and service. The message of the Buddha was that man's true happiness should be sought, not in the fulfilment of selfish ambitions, but in fellowship with all living beings,[3] that is by a sympathetic attitude towards them, doing charity and rendering them service. This latter could best be done by dedicating one's whole earthly or human existence to service. Hence, the establishment of the monastic order, for those who preferred the shortest and quickest route to Nirvana.[4]

Monasticism or Life under Buddhism. These ideals of Buddhism readily affected life. For the people who desired to follow its tenets in the best possible manner, it established the monastic order of begging friars and nuns, as V. Smith calls them.[5] These orders developed quickly into a powerful society full of missionary zeal. By taking upon themselves the monastic vows, and binding themselves to the service of the Buddha and *Sangha*, and following the Law, the *Bhikshus* withdrew themselves completely from worldly life and temptations, and devoted themselves wholly to the propagation of the Faith.

A radical change from the prevailing mode of Brahmanic life was effected by the fact that this order was open to all, irrespective of birth or caste. This commingling of castes and races on equal terms inevitably led to an enrichment of the culture and deepening of their mutual understanding.

The Monks lived in large monasteries during the rainy season, and travelled about for the greater portion of the year teaching the new Law of Mercy, and showing the road to *Nirvana*. Once a year they met and held their conclave at one of these monasteries, at which they discussed problems connected with their faith and work,

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[3] Anasaki: *Buddhist Art*, p. 19.
[4] Described by the *Encyclopaedia Britanica* "as an extinction of the fire of passion, in one who has obtained release".
[5] V. Smith: *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, p. 9.

and made plans for the future. For this purpose monasteries had *Chaityas* or halls of worship, as also of assembly where the monks met together. The *Chaityas* and *Viharas* of Karli, Lena, Ellora or Kenhheri, are marvels of beauty as regards their architecture and carving, while those of Ajanta are unrivalled for their paintings. In these the *Bhikshus* related in stone and immortalised for posterity in paint, what to them was the sole purpose of existence, namely devotion to their Master, and through Him, to the world of living beings. The joy of life,[1] and creation, resulting from an intense devotion to a cause, and the satisfaction arising from serving it, we meet with in the reliefs and frescoes of these Cave Temples. Everyone seems happy and content in the earliest examples, fused with the same love for humanity that sent the Buddha wandering away from the riches of life into the forest.[2] In fact these monasteries have been for ages the storehouse of ancient Art and culture.

Effect of these Ideals on Art or Art under Buddhism.

As the aim of the Buddhist ideal was to free oneself from the bondage of existence, early Buddhism condemned all that made the bonds more desirable. Hence, Art in almost all its forms, was at first condemned by the Buddha. Yet we find that despite this, Art flourished under Buddhism, and even the earliest remains we can trace of Art are Buddhist. How did this happen? There are various reasons, the most important being Asoka's conversion, and the rise of Mahayana Buddhism. After these, Art has a different tale to tell. Till then, Buddhism had frowned upon Art and artists as impediments in the way of salvation. But as the Mahayana Buddhism gave Art a religious turn, and as the Imperial patron showed its propaganda value, the canons ceased to frown, after about the 3rd Century B.C., on forms of Art, which the first apostles had forbidden.

Asoka was an Emperor, and Art is the inevitable accompaniment of wealth and empire. Hence, with his conversion and under the protection and patronage of a mighty court, a doorway was opened for Art within the creed. Asoka was a mighty builder, and is reputed to have built a fabulous number of *Stupas*, *Chaityas* and *Viharas*. Besides these, he adopted a unique method for spreading his new creed. He had pillars built of sandstone, tall and slender in propor-

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[1] V. Smith: *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, p. 10.

[2] Every scene in the relief sculptures of Bharhut and Sanchi and in the paintings of Ajanta, is full of the joy of life, and proves that the Buddhist Indians of the olden times knew the preciousness of happiness.

tions, headed by lotus capitals, surmounted by perched figures of lions or elephants. On these pillars, and on solid rocks also, were inscribed Edicts of the Emperor, explaining and proclaiming the tenets of the Master's creed. Thus, with Asoka, both architecture and sculpture began to be popular, and came to be used to propagate religion.

Art as means of propagation of Faith.

By means of the reliefs surrounding the *Stupas* and the *Chaitya* walls, relating the story of the lives of the Buddha, the lessons and doctrines of Buddhism were concretely inculcated into the minds of the worshippers. They were sermons in stone and incidentally trained the people in the appreciation of Art. The artist's desire was to express an idea in a manner easily understandable and the best method was to suggest it. Hence, his work took on the suggestive and symbolical aspect.

With Mahayana Buddhism Art came on still firmer ground. From a mere instrument of propaganda, it was raised to the dignity of a form of worship. In this re-edited form of Buddhism, Buddha ceases to be the teacher, and is slowly transformed into a transcendental Godhead. Side by side with this change, there evolved a Buddhist Pantheon, very similar to the existing Brahmanic Pantheon. With the recognition of the Buddha as a God, the only proper mode of approach to him was *bhakti*, and so, Art in all its forms became a means of adoration and glorification of this new Godhead ; and it grew and flourished as the Godhead became more and more popular.

Inherent artistic tendencies in Buddhism.

Though its early tenets had condemned Art, Buddhism by its nature, was such, that it could not but give the greatest aid and impetus unconsciously to the development of Art.[1] It had, within itself, both an object of adoration, and the technique for such adoration ; but these were brought to light and developed by Mahayana Buddhism, because the original inspiration of the Master had decried them.

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[1] "It offers three sources of artistic inspiration." Anasaki tells us "the first is the conception of life implied in Buddha's personality, and proclaimed by his teachings; the second is a consequence of the first, and consists in the pious memory of the Master, cherished among his followers; the third another corollary of the first, is the practice of dedication based on the idea of universal communion".

Anasaki: *Buddhist Art*, p. 6.

The Buddha himself really was an artist, because, he perceived in man and nature the vital and sympathetic tie which bound them to his own soul. Every thing and every fellow being is embraced in his spiritual life, and thus enters into an ultimate connection with his ideal. Nothing is left outside the bounds of his sympathy ; all is vivified by the touch of personal relationship. This is the process of idealisation, the secret of artistic creation.[1]

> "This ideal of the unity of all existence is the source in Buddha's life and teaching, from which Buddhism and Buddhist Art derives its profoundest and most enduring inspiration."[2]

Buddhism as source of freedom to outcastes. To Kshatriyas.

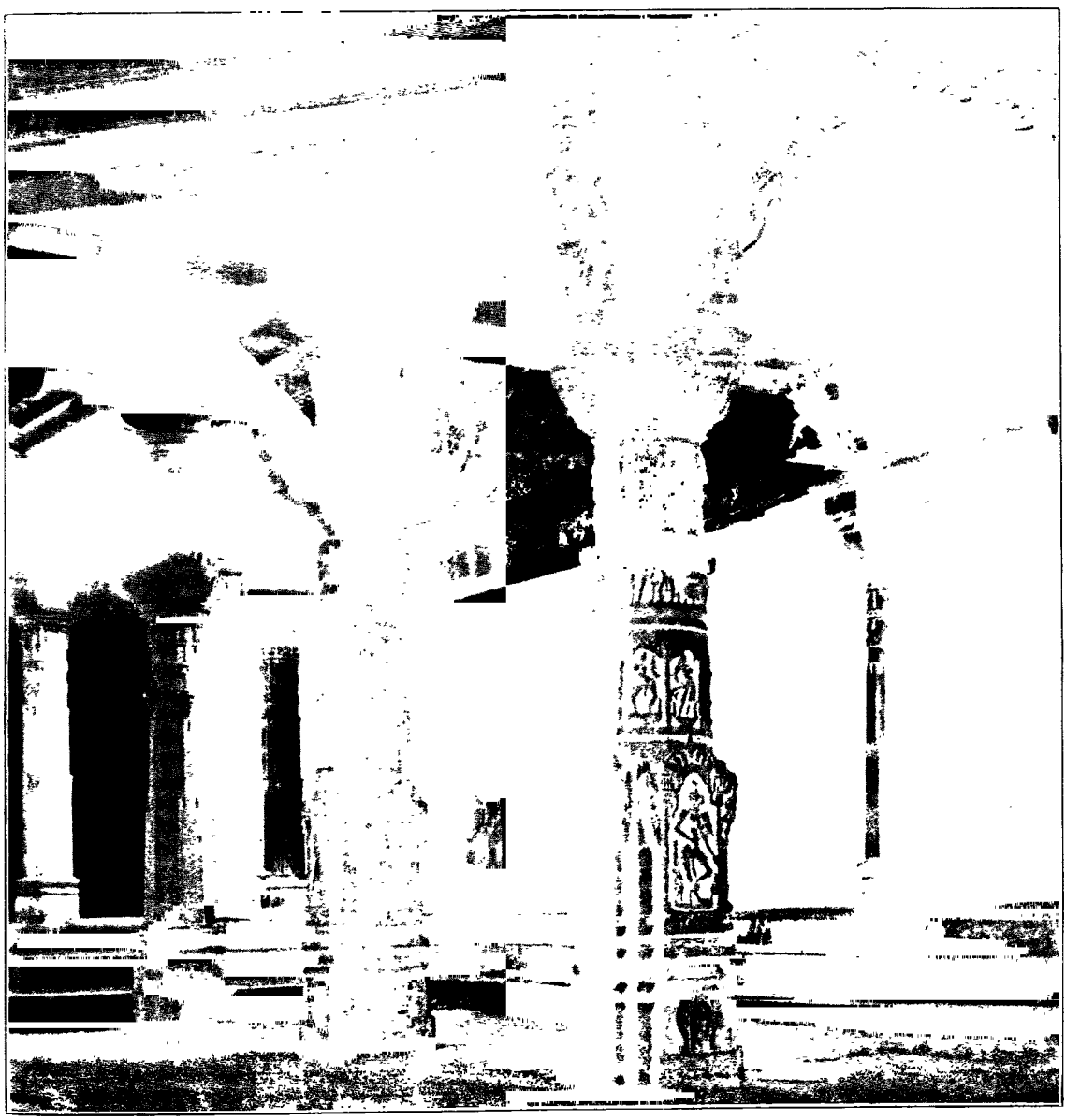
Another reason why Art flourished under Buddhism was, because, Buddhism spelt freedom and equal scope for self-expression for numbers whom the old Brahmanic order had regarded as outcastes. All the varied artistic talent of the Dravidians, and even of the aborigines, must therefore, have found an outlet by this channel, for Buddhism was open to all, whilst the Brahmans had regarded the Dravids and others as outcastes for quite a while before Buddhism. Still more so was it with the other divisions of Brahmanic society, like the Vaishyas, who found themselves free to express their artistic longings and cultural cravings, which the Brahmanic order of society had jealously guarded as a close preserve for its highest caste. In fact, Buddhism itself was the result of a great spiritual and intellectual struggle waged by Reason against the rigid dictates of Brahmanism. Most intellectual movements in the world's history have been followed by great outbursts of Art, for freedom is the nursery of Art. The Renaissance, the French Revolution, and even the recent Russian Revolution, are all living examples of this truth. The renaissance and reflorisance of Art under the Buddhist influence is, thus, the inevitable outcome of that sense of emancipation, and desire for self-expression of the masses, which comes as a consequence of a successful revolution in ideas and principles, in social structure and spiritual motivation. The results of such change become more potent when backed by political peace and economic contentment which was so dominant a feature of Asoka's prosperous reign. Nurtured by imperial might and spiritual fervour, is it at all surprising that the Art of this age took so marvellous a flight, despite the early prejudices?

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

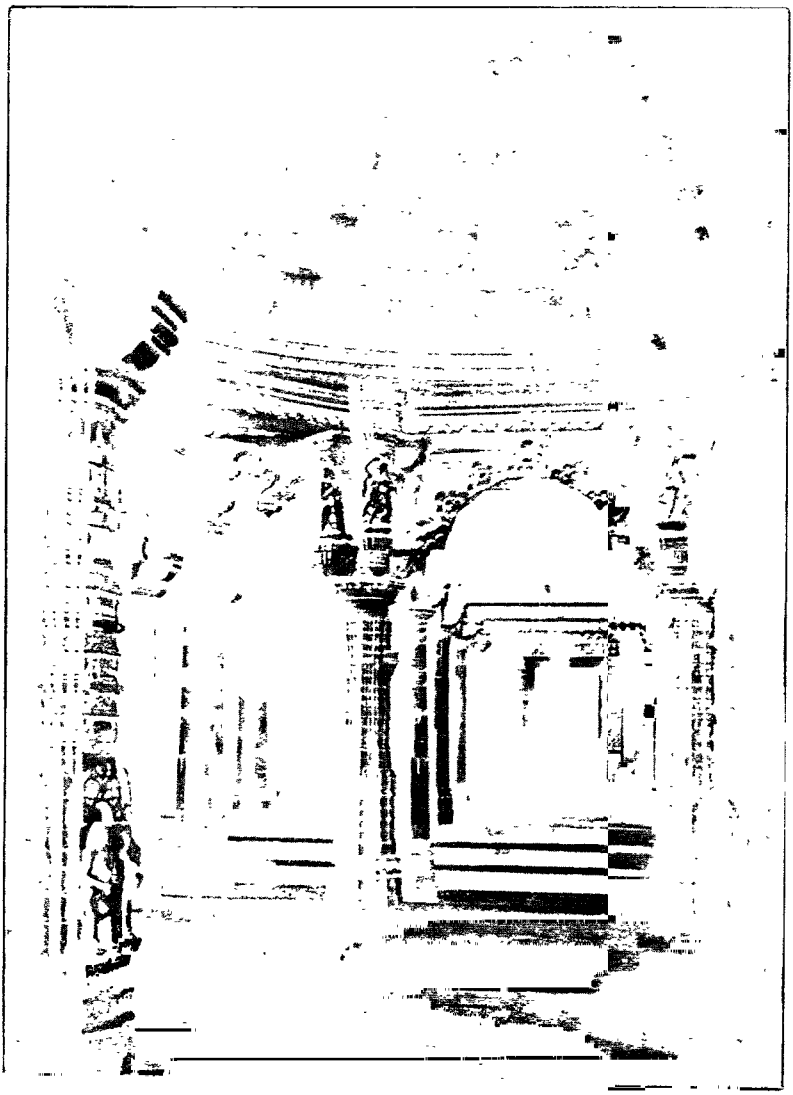
PLATE VI.

MOUNT ABU

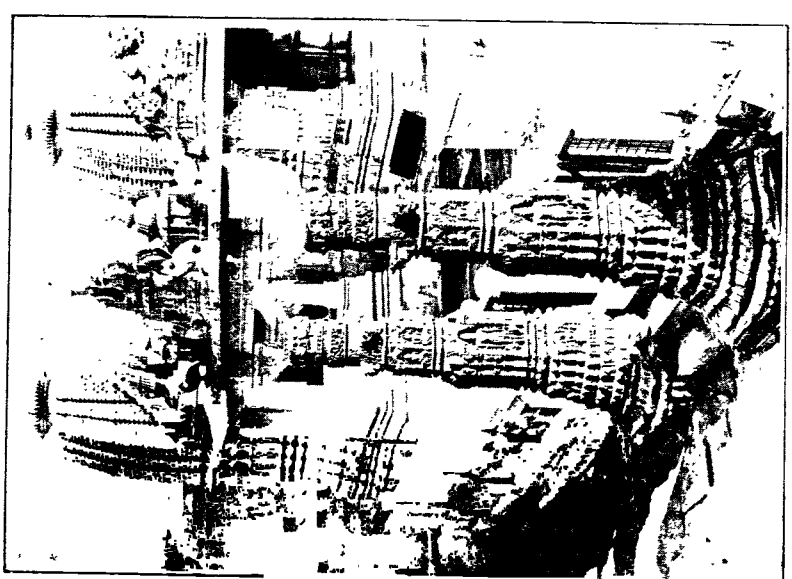


By courtesy J. C. Lafrooka

Traceries in marble, resembling lace work that bewitch the imagination by their intricate workmanship



MOUNT AB



OSIA-TORANA IN FRONT OF JAINA TEMPLE

Jainism. Jainism comes into prominence about the same time as Buddhism; also as a revolt against Brahman domination about the 6th Century B. C.[1] Its adherents really claim for it an origin far earlier than Buddhism. Indeed, for them, there never was a time when Jainism was not known.[2] Mahavira the last of the 24 Tirthankaras was born about the same time as the founder of Buddhism. Like him, too, he was of Royal lineage, and a Kshatriya by birth. Of this young man far less is known than of Gautama Buddha. Jaina traditions tell us that at the age of thirty he, like Prince Siddhartha, left his home and entered a previously established order, that of Parsvanatha,[3] but left it after twelve months; and spent the following twelve years in self-mortification and meditation. After achieving Supreme[4] Knowledge, he started preaching his Law of Renunciation, and became the founder of historical Jainism. After a time there came to him a high tide of success, and the religion he revived survives, in spite of many vicissitudes, in many parts of India even to-day amongst some of the most wealthy communities of this country.

Jainism is a religion of intense individualism, and hence proselyting was not part of its routine as in Buddhism. Having commenced in Magadha, it spread in northern India from the Punjab to the Bay of Bengal. Then came a great famine, followed by years of persecution; and we have an Exodus to the South, and the Jains settled themselves round about Mysore and the Tamil countries. About 300 B. C., we see the Jains gradually losing their foothold in Magadha, and moving westwards into Ujjain and Mathura,[5] and ultimately towards the West coast, that is Gujarat and Kathiawad. In these regions Jainism still flourishes and has a great influence.

Ideals and Beliefs. As regards the creed that Mahavira preached, it was in many respects similar to Buddhism. Vincent Smith says :—

> "Both religions rely on the support of an organised society of monks and friars, reject the authority of the Vedas and the exclusive claim of the Brahmans, abhor bloody sacrifices and treat with insistence the doctrine of extreme respect for every form of animal life (Ahimsa)."[6]

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[1] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 150.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 153.
[3] Mrs. Stevenson: *Heart of Jainism*, p. 8.
[4] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 159.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 157.
[6] V. Smith: *Oxford History of India*, p. 42.

Besides these, the important doctrine of *Karma* was also an integral part of these religions, for it was because of this doctrine, that sacrifices were forbidden, for killing of any life meant the shortening of its span, wherewith it could further evolve itself, so as to raise its position in the next incarnation.

The other important ideals and beliefs of Jainism, besides these in common with Buddhism were with regard to God, and the ultimate end of life. God, as a divine being, or causative agent, was never recognised by Jainism ; and in that sense, it may be termed atheistic. Neither did it believe in *Paramatma* or the Supreme soul or spirit.[1] The Jains early taught that one should not say "God rains" but just "the clouds rain." Thus, one of their fundamental principles seem to have been that there is no power higher than man.[2] A Tirthankara was a denomination originally applied to a man who had made the passage across the ocean of worldly illusion (*samsara*), and who had reached that further shore where he is, and will for ever be, free from action and desire enjoying a passionless and ineffable peace.[3] He had attained *Kevala* that is supreme knowledge, and became a Kevalin or Arhat[4] that is the absolutely knowing, the absolutely perfect, sinless, formless, desireless, immutable and eternal.

The common aim of all Indian religions seems to be freedom from the cycle of rebirth. They all have various names for it : *Moksha*, *Nirvana*, *Siddhi* were the common aims in all the three respectively. For the Jains, this ultimate goal was a state in which the *Karma* or past obligation had become extinguished, and henceforth the Spirit, though still existing as an individual spirit, escapes reincarnation, that is, it has no more to be bound by the bondage of the flesh, or birth and death. It is free and eternally self-existent. The difference between the Jain ideal and the Buddhist Nirvana is worth noticing. In both the individual predominates, and even in the final bliss, does not become a part of a greater whole—the Moksha of Brahmanism. Instead, in Jainism, the individual becomes the absolute knowing, perfect, formless and immutable ; while in Buddhism, after the release from the Cycle of Birth and Death, the individual just "ceases to be".

[1] Mrs. Stevenson: *The Heart of Jainism*, Introduction, p. 14.

[2] "Denying God, they worship man, to wit the Venerable (Arhat), the Conqueror (Jina), the founder of the (four) Orders, (Tirthankara)." *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[3] Mrs. Stevenson: *Heart of Jainism*, Intro., p. 15.

[4] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, pp. 159, 160.

Kevala Dnana being the ultimate goal of Jainism, like Buddhism once again, the monastic life was strongly recommended. Art, as a form of worldly attachment, was highly condemned. Nevertheless, it found its way into this creed in course of time as it did in the sister cult also. The reason in this case probably was a little different. With the same ultimate object as in Buddhism, the Jains too had amongst them monastic orders ; for they regarded the life of renunciation to be the shortest road to salvation. But, unlike Buddhism, particularly the Mahayana form, the Jains had no other social institution that effected the scheme of life of the people. The Jain monks, though as fervent in the preaching of the word of their Tirthankar, were yet not so eager for artistic expression. Perhaps their forms of worship did not demand such concrete symbols of devotion as the Buddhists, who after the Imperial patronage of the Mauryas had learnt to prize these modes of evident adoration. The Jain laity, moreover, lived within the influence and under the social ideals of Brahmanism. Hence, as both Jainism and Buddhism had no social institutions apart from monasteries, they were not able to maintain that hold on daily life, and consequently that cultivation of Art, that Brahmanism maintained.

Art, however, entered the Jain fold in the form of architecture, and sculpture as part of adornment ; and in course of time grew to amazing heights in these spheres only. It is intended here in this section before going on to Brahmanism, to discuss Jainism and its contribution to Indian Art by examining some of the concrete remains. The reason for disposing off Jain Art here is that, except for architecture, Jainism has not influenced the ideals and course of Indian Art much. Besides, its artistic contribution as we have it to-day is fragmentary, though at times very beautiful and intricate. Moreover, there is hardly any new art motive or any other peculiar feature in Indian Art that may be called Jain typically, except perhaps in architecture. They always assimilated whatever was useful to them. We will, therefore, in this section go over the rather meagre data we have to judge from and see if we can assess the contribution of Jainism to Indian Art.

Architecture. *Stupas* and *Chaityas* formed at first a part of Jain worship ; and the two existing remains of Jain Stupas are the Kankali mound near Mathura, and another at Ramnagar near Bareilly.[1] Chaityas are also evidenced in the cave dwellings

[1] Mrs. Stevenson: *Heart of Jainism*, p. 280.

of Badami, Patna, and Ellora. These are all of average merit, with nothing extraordinary in them. Of their monuments in South India there are no remains. But it was in the 11th Century that the Jains blossomed forth,

> "like the sudden flowering of the Flemish art under Van Eycks: in both cases all the intermediate stages have been swept away by the ravages of time and the devastation of war, and we are abruptly confronted with the perfection of loveliness while the toilsome steps that lead up to it are hidden from us."[1]

Temples. This age of Jain architecture takes on a new form. No more are visible the *Chaityas* and *Stupas*. Instead we have grand temples, of which the plan is similar to those of the Vishnu shrines, and very probably was borrowed from them. In fact, their temples take on various forms, in the South very often Shaivite, in the North Vishnavaite, so that it is concluded that they borrowed the local style wherever they settled.[2]

The inner shrine is usually guarded by a richly carved doorway.[3] The idol itself clothed or nude, eyes closed or staring, is of very little artistic importance. The *Sabha Mandapa* has sometimes very little carving, but the outer portico in nearly all Jaina temples is a very fairyland of beauty, the finest of whose carving is equalled by the white tracery of frost when they are in marble.[4]

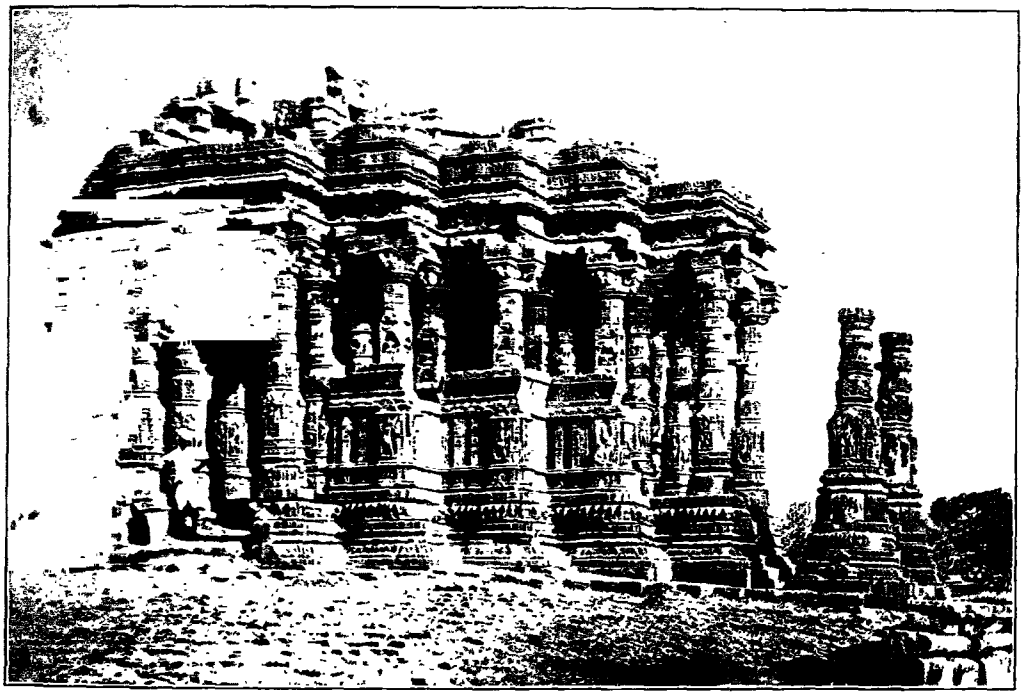
> "From the dome of these porches hang pendents of marble, whose workmanship brings the memory of the stairway of Christ's church, and the Roof of the Divinity School in Oxford, and gives the spectator a new standard of beauty". (The writer does not give the place she is referring to but it must be the Abu Temple, that unrivalled dream in marble.) For "Mt. Abu, bearing on its bosom shrines that are marvels of fretted loveliness, the frowning rocks of Girnar, crowned with its diadem of temples, and Satrunjaya in its surpassing holiness, half fortress and half temple city, bears witness to the fervour of those days".[5]

Besides these, there are the famous towers of Chitor, of the 9th and 15th Century, which, Havel tells us, are unsurpassed of their kind in the whole world.[6] Palitana, the temple city of Gujarat, has a charm of its own like its prototype at Girnar, but the sculpture is

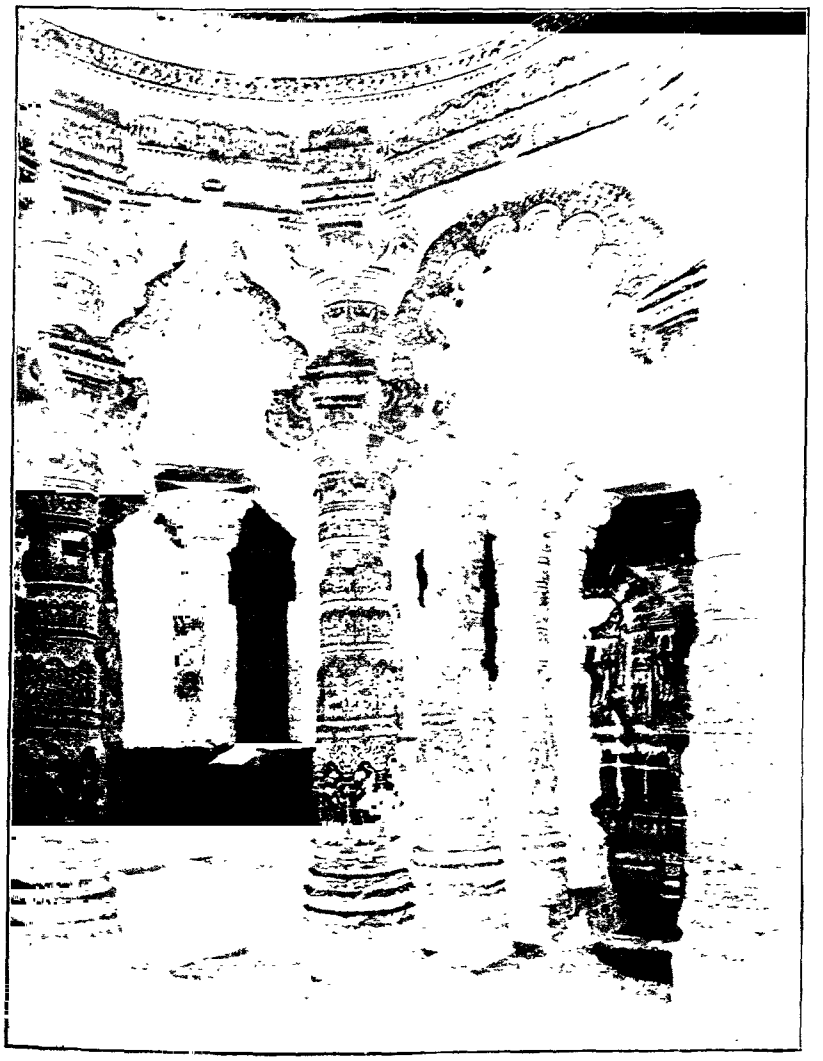
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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 281.
[2] Havel: *A Study of Indo-Aryan Civilisation*, p. 175.
[3] Mrs. Stevenson: *Facts from "Heart of Jainism."*
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 281.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 282.
[6] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 127.

PLATE VIII. MODHERA



(a) THE SABHA MANDAPA

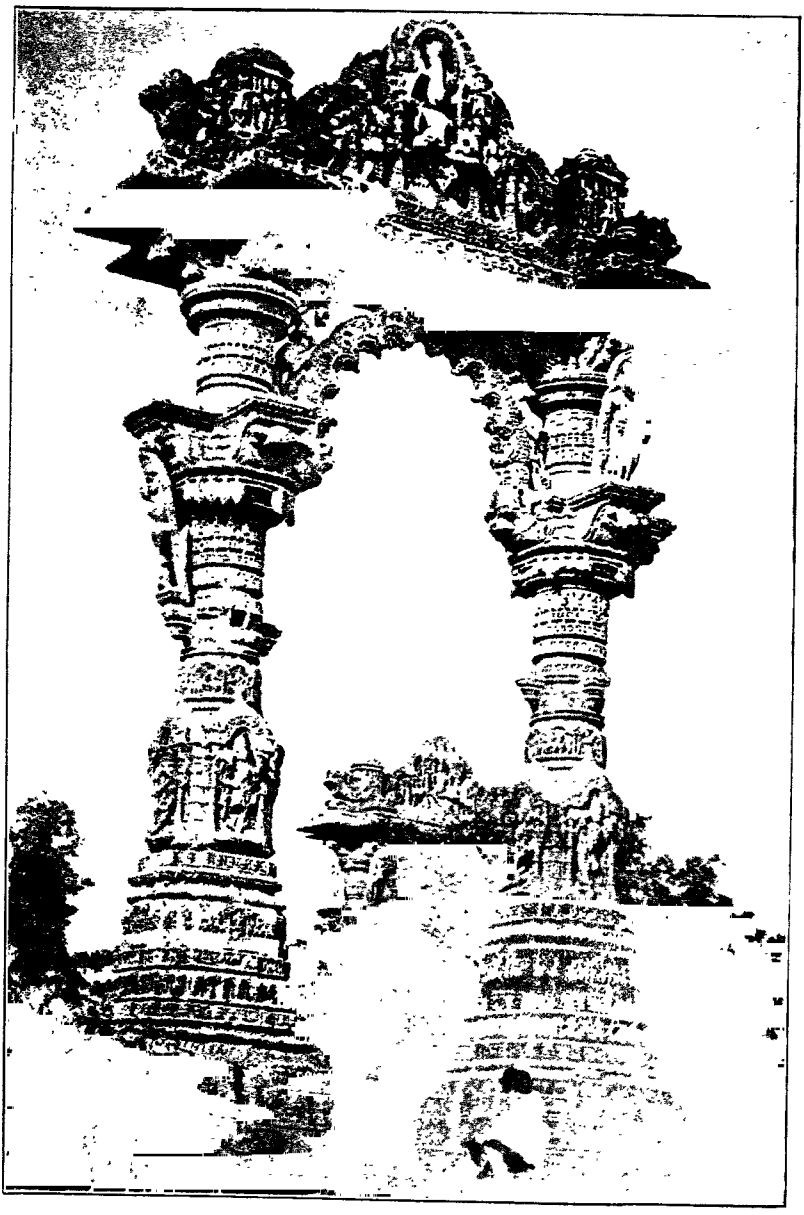


(b) INTERIOR

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

PLATE IX.

VAGNADAR—KIRTTISTAMBHA



Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.

generally unimportant.[1] Had the glories of Gujarat survived the ruthless destruction of the idol haters, symbolised by the famous temple of Somanatha and its contemporary surrounding wealth and beauty, the record of Jain architecture would have been unsurpassed. Peeps into this gigantic array are offered to us by ruins of structure such as that marvellous shrine at Modhera, with its exquisite and daintly fashioned *sabha mandapa*, which even to-day in its dismembered state, allures the eye with its jewel-like intricacy and deft proportions, relating in every stone and curve the reverence and devotion that gave it birth. The Kirttistambhas at Vagnagar are imposing structures in themselves, and once heralded an equally sublime structure, of which no vestige remains at the moment except these majestic lovely forms, towering above the debris of modern village life, whispering to the wind, sun and rain, the splendour that was, and may yet be.

These are really the only Art remains of the Jains. Of painting or sculpture, apart from their decorative reliefs, we have hardly any remains. The few specimens of sculpture we have are on a colossal scale as the Yannus and others at Mysore, really noble works of Art, but very few in number. The reason why the Jains seem to be so poor at sculpture or painting is to be found in the nature of their religion. The joy of the senses had to be sternly repressed ; and so these objects of sense gratification naturally received little notice from the Jains. Havel suggests they had no divine incarnations, like Krishna, to inspire them ; and

> "neither did the Jain Saints or deities develop into personifications of nature's manifold aspects. The Jain sculptors and painters were therefore limited to a very narrow range of ideals. They had no rich mythology or lives of saints, full of wonder and of human interest, to illustrate, no grand conception of nature's moods only the few fixed immutable poses of the ascetic absorbed in contemplation."[2]

Original inspiration of Jainism.

Why Havel ignores the twenty-four Tirthankaras who laboured for the emancipation of all living beings, we cannot understand. His reasoning does not seem very sound ; for, Buddhism too, had at its start, hardly anything more. It was the original artistic heritage of the people that, later on, wreathed together into a whole the Jataka fables, and ultimately developed the Buddhist Pantheon. Why could not Jainism have done the same?

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 128.
[2] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 129.

Or perhaps they had, but their Art remains are lost we cannot say. The Jains were probably never very dominant as a secular power; but their spiritual ascendancy led to a fierce revolution particularly in the South; and, with the decline of their influence in these parts, their monuments, if any, may have perished irretrievably. Besides the wholesale destruction of their shrines during the Muslim period, there was also an absorption in the sense of conversion.[1] Many of the Jain shrines, as remains bear witness, were converted by the Mohammedans to the use of an alien ritual

> "No original mosques the Mahamadans ever erected, rivalled these made over temples for beauty. In the zenith of its prosperity, Jain architecture had taught the Hindoo builders much; now in adversity they still influenced their persecutors, and the still too little known mosques of Ahmedabad owe more of their unrivalled beauty to Jaina inspiration than to any other source."[2]

Besides architecture and sculpture as adornment of architecture there was one other Art Jainism encouraged: Poetry. The practice of reciting prayers developed Jain poetry. Like the Buddhists they had, from the very start, and as a mark of their protest against the Archaic Vedic language in which the Brahmanic Scriptures were given, all their Scriptures in the Vernacular. Hence, wherever their influence spread, they aided the cultivation of the vernacular. This is really a very important and peculiar Jain contribution in the culture of India as a whole; for cultivation of the vernacular language is the first impulse to the development of local literature. Tamil, Kanarese, Gujarati and Hindi were cultivated and enriched by them in the same sympathetic manner. The Jain Poetry, however is, in consonance with the rest of their artistic creations, more devout and religious than secular. It is noteworthy that the Jains refrained from the Drama and all its connected Arts, Music, Dancing and Acting. Their poetry is, therefore, more unalloyed, even the imagery employed in the poems less sensuous and worldly—than any other poetry in the whole world. The greatest Tamil poem still surviving bears ample testimony on this point; and the same may be said of the rest of Jain literary creations.

This completes our assessment of the Arts under Jainism. In certain spheres, their influence was noteworthy and peculiar. But, in comparison to the Buddhist and Brahmanic contribution to the growth and development of Indian Art, their share appears to be meagre. Though some of their monuments add lustre to the already

[1] Mosques at Kutub-Minar and Ahmedabad.
[2] Mrs. Stevenson: *Heart of Jainism*, p. 283.

existing glorious array of India's artistic monuments, such as the shrines at Mt. Abu, their loss or non-existence would in no way diminish the value of Indian Art, though we would, of course, lose very beautiful individual works. The loss of either the entire Buddhist or Brahmanic remains would mean half the glory of Indian Art shattered The same cannot be said of the Jain Art, beautiful as some parts of it are. Such a result seems to be inevitable from the very nature of Jainism. It was, and has remained, a puritanical and ascetic religion more fully than Buddhism or Brahmanism, and hence its outlook on Art was barely tolerant, when it was not actively hostile. In a summary of motive force therefore, impelling Indian Art to the creation of masterpieces, we cannot assign Jain influence a high place, as it appears to have given birth to no Art motifs as explained in Chapter VI.

Now, we will turn to the most important religion in India, the basis of most Indian Art and inspiration.

Brahmanism. Brahmanism, is the oldest and the most important religion of India. Its origin is traceable to the Vedas. Its philosophy is enshrined in the treatises called Upanishads. This philosophy is of a high intellectual character, dealing with speculation on the nature of the Universe, of Life and Eternity. These philosophies being too high for the average individual, we have an early dis-association between philosophy and daily ritual, or religion for the masses. The latter grew and developed ; and from it spring the usages and customs of the times embodied in the Dharmashastras. It is through these writings that we are able to trace the nature and growth of Brahmanism from the most ancient times.

History. The history of Brahmanism is one of growing importance. It may be said that it is practically the history of India on its social and spiritual side. Both Buddhism and Jainism were waves of protestations ; but they never really upset completely the main scheme of Brahmanic life, or the fundamental institutions and conventions of society. The Buddhist and Jain religions were by their nature, asocial, and had, accordingly, no social scheme or institutions to challenge the Brahmanic hold on the daily life of the people. All throughout their supremacy, both in Northern and Southern India, the daily life of the people was guided, and social relations regulated by the Hindu codes of law and behaviour. So that, in spite of Buddhist and Jain ascendancy for centuries together. we may with justice assert that the history of Brahmanism is the history of Indian civilisation, with just one qualification, that it

was not so apparent during the heyday of the Protestant creeds, specially Buddhism.

From the 4th Century of the Christian era that culture begins to reassert itself. This process continues, up to the 8th Century, when Brahmanism had definitely ousted Buddhism from its place as the most important religion in India. The Northern revival of Brahmanism was relatively quiet; but that in the South, from about the 7th Century onwards, was very aggressive. It is usually described as a Shaivite revival,—because it assumed the Lord Shiva as its head,—was of an aggressive form, while the revival in the North under Vishnu took a milder form. Besides these main groups, we have growing with this renewed aspect of Brahmanism numbers of other and smaller divisions of which Shankaracharya's Vedantic philosophy is the most important.

Faced with the Shaiva, the Vaishnava and the Vedantic divisions, Brahmanism attempted to provide for all these faiths or sects a unified philosophy and a common social background. The Brahmins absorbed into orthodox Brahmanism these new sects, by a process of assimilation, for which they appear to have an inborn genius. Brahma manifested himself as Iswara, and the latter through its two creative principles, *Purusha* and *Shakti* or female principle caused matter or *Prakriti* to live : and this, in its turn, manifested itself in the eternal phenomenon of the cosmic energy of Creation, Preservation and Destruction. Brahma himself was the Lord of Creation, Vishnu of Preservation and Siva of Destruction.[1] Thus came into existence the *Trimurti*, a triple manifestation of the Divine order, or Unity. Three in one and one in three. So was achieved the synthesis. From this last development arises modern Hinduism, in essence the same Brahmanic faith, and like it in a state of incessant movement and change, yet, like the ocean, it remains the same, ready and able to absorb the creeds and customs and rituals of other systems.[2]

The Principal Ideas and Beliefs.

The Vedic faith was Polytheistic, recognising a God in every natural manifestation. But even in the Vedas, the idea is clearly developing, of a Unity behind all this Diversity. In the Upanishads, this belief is elaborated and established of a Divine Unity from which all life had emerged, and to which it would ultimately revert. The ancient sages had carefully observed nature and its ceaseless change ; their

[1] V. Smith: *History of Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, Introduction, p. 6.
[2] Radhakrishnan: *Hindu View of Life*, pp. 12 and 129.

keen eyes had not failed to notice one divine reality, behind all this ceaseless illusion, or 'Maya' which they had sought to fathom. As all Indian Philosophy has been a search after this reality or Unity, so also is its Art full of the same spirit. For things of this world, which were mere illusion, the Indian cared naught. All his effort and striving were directed toward this one end only, that of establishing or realising the Divine essence from which all emanated. Hence, the deep spirituality of their outlook, which inspired as well as coloured the best artistic expression of the age.

It is open to question if this spiritual outlook on life, deliberately removed from the crude realism of the visible world, is a distinctly Aryan trait. It seems more a special gift of this land, for it is hardly observed in any of the other races descended from the Aryan stock. It is just in this particular land where nature is so bountiful, it supplies all man's material needs and more, with the least possible effort, and thus leaves leisure for contemplation of nature its beauty and mystery. Surrounded by beauty and living amidst leisure led to an intensive cultivation of Art as a concrete expression of this beauty, embodying a veiled suggestion of the mystery that links the Finite which the Infinite and the Individual with the Universe.

But this process was gradual. We can trace the stages very clearly in the art history of the ancient period which extends for this work to about the 12th Century A. D. While the Aryans were still nature-loving children, touched a little by the piety of the Buddhism, we have the art reliefs of Bharhut and Sanchi. In the Amaravati reliefs, that is, about the 7th Century A. D., they appear to be affected by the magic of the land. Having drunk deep of life, and atmosphere of this land for over a century, we observe a sobering of the mind, and a distinct spirituality behind the execution, which leads to the refinement of style also. This is even more evident in the Gupta sculpture, which gives the third stage in the development of spirituality. Here another quality is observed to grow, which was absent at Amaravati. Restraint, which the adoring folks of Amaravati knew not, is effectively rendered in the Gupta sculpture. The exuberance of the love and devotion of these artists seems to find itself in the quiet dignity of their Art, which gives it a profound depth and added spirituality.

According to the Brahmanic view of life, not only did man emerge from the ultimate Unity, but all creation was a manifestation of the Eternal Spirit. Thus we have what in our days is called the Pan-

theistic conception Since God revealed himself in all creation, He was all pervading and everywhere, and the three ways in which man could get to know him were through Religion, Yoga, and Art; for the direct object of all these three in ancient India was to reveal the Spirit behind the form.[1]

The End of Life or *Moksha* we have already briefly explained while contrasting the Buddhist, Jain, and Brahmanic goals of life. The purpose of existence, according to the Hindus, is to attain *Brahman* the *Encyclopedia Britanica* tells us.[2] *Brahman* may be translated as a state of Beatitude, or stillness of the absolute;[3] to attain which the direct pathway was through *Moksha*, meaning complete spiritual emancipation. What Coomaraswamy calls a release from the Ego, or becoming, that is, freedom from cycle of rebirth. This can only be attained

> "by realisation of self and of entity when nothingness of ourselves is left in us. The virtue of the action of those who are free beings lies in the complete co-ordination of their being, body, soul and spirit, the inner and outer man at one."[4]

This stage of selflessness is realised only when a person has fulfilled all his obligations to himself and to others, and has no desire or obligation—*Karma* left.

Karma is a thought, or deed, which has formed a lien, a bond or an obligation, with our fellows in the living universe. It is the motive force of life in all its mutations, relations and wanderings—the only explanation for the apparent injustice of the world. Life for the Hindus is a cycle of births and rebirths, until the ultimate goal is attained. In each new existence, man's destiny is governed by his past life and obligations. Whatever new tie is formed, or is left unfulfilled in the preceding existence, has to be accounted for in the next. There is no escape. Once all such ties are dissolved, and obligations fulfilled, one is free from the chains of existence. The ideal is thus to free oneself from all attachment and desire, for both imply a bond. Whatever action a *Jivan-mukta* or spiritually freedman performs, must therefore, be of the nature of manifestation, and will be without purpose or intention.[5]

For the realisation of this aim the Brahmanic Shastras had laid down a whole scheme of life.

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[1] Article on *Brahmanism*.
[2] Radhakrishnan: *Hindu View of Life*, p. 63.
[3] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 106.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 107.
[5] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 106.

Influence of these Ideals on Life and Society.

The paths by which one can secure emancipation for oneself and be merged with the infinite were three in number : the *Karma-Marga*, or the path of Deeds, the *Bhakti-Marga*, the path of Devotion and the *Gnana-Marga*, the path of Knowledge.

The *Gnana-Marga*, the pathway of highest knowledge was marked out for the Brahmans, or the intellectual Kshatriyas. It was the shortest and the most direct way of 'release' from the Ego, perhaps because it was meant for a few only. Krishna calls the Karmapath greater in the Bhagavad-Gita.

The path of works or service the *Karma-Marga*, was for the busy man of the world, the statesman, artist, merchant, and labourer. It helped, not only to complete the unfulfilled obligations of previous births, but also enabled the doer to express himself in devotional creations or acts, which brought as it were their own salvation. Thus was made a most subtle bond with Art.

The path of faith or the *Bhakti-Marga*, has a general application, for it was a way which was open to all classes. All whose hearts were filled with the love of God, and gave their lives to Him, could find salvation in *Bhakti*, though worldly pursuit might clog their feet and make the way longer and more difficult.[1]

These three paths are prescribed for persons who desire to attain *Moksha*. But we know, that there are always hundreds of people alive and flourishing whose consciences are never troubled with any sense of obligation and from whose thought the desire to obtain eternal bliss is far far away. Did the Brahmanic system make provision for these people? It did, and therein lies its greatness,[2] that it compassed within its religious fold all forms of life regarding nothing as profane or irreligious. Human life was divided into two sections. The first was the path of Self-assertion, and the second that of Returns, *Pravritti-Marga*, and *Nivritti-Marga*.[3] In the first of these, provision is made for the young, who love the world and its pleasures and vanities. For them, *Artha* and *Kama*—meaning wealth and enjoyment of sense-pleasure—were both legitimate preoccupations, part of their life and dharma.[4] For, to desire these aims is not sin, but youth, and to forbid the satisfaction of the thirst

[1] Havel: *The Ideals of Indian Art*, pp. 104-106.
[2] Radhakrishnan: *Hindu View of Life*, p. 79.
[3] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 7.
[4] "Bhagawat Gita" Krishna allayed Arjuna's many misgivings in fighting against his dearest relatives by telling him that fighting was the Kshatriya dharma—duty.

of youth is not cure ; rather, desire suppressed breathes pestilence.[1]

> "The Brahmans, therefore, notwithstanding the austere rule appointed for themselves, held, that an ideal human society must provide for the enjoyment of all pleasures, by those who wished for them; they would say, perhaps, that those who have risen above the mere pleasure, however refined, are just those who have already tasted pleasure to the full."[2]

It was never the doctrine of the Hindus to force a person to be good for fear of consequence, or to force a pure life upon those unprepared for it. Each individual self was left free to work out its own 'self-realisation' within the larger self, in what space and time it chose. Society's business was to make possible all that he needed to attain that end, for no better guide could be found than self-experience. And therefore, the man on the path of 'self-assertion' was allowed full scope until the realisation dawned on him that the pleasures of life were *maya* or illusion, and he voluntarily took the 'pathway of return'. Thus was the Brahmanic religion never divorced from every day life in India, and the mistaken distinction, of regarding certain expressions of life as profane and certain others sacred, never found a place within Hindu Theology. They succeeded in illuminating daily life with the light of Heaven.[3]

The social order under Brahmanism was based upon the division of society into groups : the Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and Sudras. This classification was based on the distinction of the three prominent types of men recognised by most thinkers.[4]

Each ego, the Brahman sociologist assumed by natural law, was always, or nearly always, born into its own befitting environment.[5] A much evolved soul would be born a Brahman, and a less evolved, a Vaishya. Because birth was thus an ordinance of nature or the result of one's *Karma*, contentment with one's environment was easily inculcated. The caste of his birth prescribed an individual's *dharma*, his place in life and duty. If one felt dissatisfied with one's status, the only way to rid oneself of it was to do the

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[1] & [2] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 8.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

[4] The Mob, the devourers of Blake or Slaves of Nietzche; the Prolifics of Blake or the Master or Nietzche. In Indian Society the Bodhisattva, or Brahmana or Superman. A similar classification as the above described, was that of the Indian castes.

Ibid., p. 11. Prof. Radhakrishnan also supports natural classification. *Hindu View of Life*, p. 11.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

prescribed dharma, for then only was one raised to a higher status. [1] The doing of one's duty meant fulfilling past obligations, and so hastening Release or Emancipation. Thus, not only social life but individual life also was sought to be regulated by the Hindus, as we shall further elucidate.

To enable one to do one's *dharma*, to the best of one's ability, for the ultimate attainment of *Moksha*, in whatever sphere of life one is born, the whole span of earthly existence was divided into *Ashramas*. To each of these *Ashramas* were assigned certain duties and obligations, the orderly fulfilment of which meant freeing oneself steadily from the grip of *Karma*. While the individual and social side of *Karma* were inseparably intertwined, the theory of varna or caste emphasised the social aspect, and that of *ashrama* or stages of life the individual aspect. [2] An ideal individual life was divided into four *ashramas*.

The first was the *Brahmacharin* stage, or studenthood, in which the individual strove under proper teachers, to acquire knowledge, learn self-discipline and fit himself for the responsibilities of life.

Next came the individual's duty to the state and the fulfilment of his existence. He married and entered the second or the *Grahasta Ashrama*. Having fulfilled his duties here, and provided for his wife and children, if he felt himself fit, [3] he entered the third or *Vanaprastha Ashrama*.

Here the householder is supposed to retire into a forest, and meditate and pray, and prepare himself for the last stage, namely that of the *Sanyasi*; where his spiritual development was his only concern, and he is like a *Bodhisattva* waiting for final emancipation or *Moksha*. This progress from the *Grahastha Ashrama* to that of the *Sanyasi* was hardly made in one life, except by especially evolved persons such as the "real *brahmanas*" or *bodhisattvas*. Hence, the recurrence or reincarnations, till the purpose of existence was fulfilled, and the city of the God's *devanagari* was established on earth, [4] which meant that the fulfilment of the purpose of civilisation was accomplished.

[1] Says Arjuna,

"Till I conquer crush my foe,
Win again our long lost fame,
Salvation's self to me were woe
Hindrance to my lofty aim."

(R. C. Dutt: From Bhairavi's *Kirata Arjunum*, p. 439.)

[2] Radhakrishnan: *Hindu View of Life*, p. 82.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 83, 91.

[4] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 2.

This in brief is the Brahmanic scheme of life, a social organisation consciously designed[1] to meet the philosophical conception of life, and to facilitate the attainment of the end of life for all its individual members.

How do these ideals of refined enjoyment of the pleasures of life within the limitations of one's status and qualifications, and the scheme of life and duty founded upon them, react on Art and its development?

Brahmanism and Art.

We have already mentioned the artistic heritage of the Vedic Aryans, and the intrinsic peculiarity of the Vedic ritual to be the fount from which the fine Arts sprang. Given this basis, how did the attitude of Brahmanism affect Art? Art was encouraged and cultivated as pertaining to the fulfilment of the prescribed religious rituals and of the recognised aims of life and the duties of citizen. It was not merely as an accessory in religious worship that Art forms were permitted and encouraged, though, with the recognition of the *Bhakti-Marga*, Art got more entwined with ritual and worship.

Bhakti.

Bhakti, this pathway of love and devotion readily commended itself to the artist's soul, and though originating with Brahmanism, became equally popular with the faith of the Buddha and Mahavira, Vishnu, Siva and Krishna. Where could a devotee get a better and more permanent form of worship than Art, especially architecture, and sculpture? These Arts therefore, flourished under the patronage of all these faiths. In consequence, Art took wings; and, inspired by the devotion that filled both the artist and the patron, soared higher and higher into the regions of profound thought and mystery, embodying and conveying these abtruse philosophies by means of subtle suggestions.

Nothing stands to evidence the perfect unison with which the artist, the craftsman, masons,[2] architects and patrons were all inspired to give of their best, so well as the famous "temple of the artificers"[3] at Mount Abu. Having done all the work that they were paid for, to the satisfaction of their masters, they voluntarily erected another famous shrine to express their own real devotion

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[2] Mrs. Stevenson: *Heart of Jainism*, p. 282.
[3] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 107.

and *bhakti*, known to this day as the temple of Artificers.[1] Can one imagine artisans doing such a thing in modern times?

Bhakti, which was becoming prominent ever since the Mahayana Buddhist ascendancy, had become the keynote of Indian Art by the 6th or 7th Century A.D. It imparted to Art that forgetfulness of the self in the creation of the soul's longing, which is so essential for the highest expression. Havel gives the valuation of this creed very well, in his usual impetuous manner.

> "Bhakti, is the moving spirit of all great religious art in the West and in the East. It is Bhakti which lifts the art of Fra Angelico or Bellini into a higher spiritual plane than that of Titian or Corregio. Forced labour, money, or artistic genius might create another Diwani-Khas at Delhi—another elysium on earth for sensual desires, and perhaps another Taj. But, without Bhakti, India, whether she be Hindu, Mahomedan or Christian, can never again build shrines like those of Sanchi, Ajanta, Elephanta, or Ellora, or when Bhakti is dead, India from being the home of world's religion, will become the storm centre of the East."[2]

Besides *Bhakti*, another important reaction Brahmanism had upon Art, was the intimate contact it established between Art and daily life, through rituals and sacrifices. It is these that carried Art within the homes of the peasant and the labourer ; it is these that refined, spiritualised every day concerns, and made the incidents of ordinary life the symbols of eternal verities.

Again, through its social system, Brahmanism helped to produce ready craftsmen, with considerable hereditary skill, acquired through ages of excellent training by teachers, themselves heirs of an endless succession of master teachers, so that Indian craftsmen were renowned all over the world, for the marvels they wrought in the plains of Aryavarta. Mahumud of Ghazni, fanatic as he was, spared the lives only of the craftsmen of India during his relentless and ruinous raids, so that he could carry them away with him to build Mosques, like the famous temple at Somnath, which inspired a regret from even his stony heart, as he watched it crumbling under the flames of his bigotry.

All through the Muslim period, these craftsmen kept the Hindu traditions alive and fused the new Art under Islam with the same spirit of *Bhakti*. For Havel says it is the warmth of Hindu genius that makes the cold marble of the Taj so alive ; and "makes us feel that it is not a cold monument of marble, but Shah Jehan's beloved

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[1] Mrs. Stevenson: *Heart of Jainism*, p. 282.
[2] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, pp. 113-115.

Mumtaz who lives still in all her youthful beauty upon the banks of the shining Jumna."[1]

Not only then, but to this date, this social system has been the preserver of the Indian culture, and educator of the Indian peoples.[2] Even in its decline, it has kept alive that spark which, given suitable environment, blazes out into the undying fire of artistic creation, as the very modern Indian schools of Art amply testify.

Through its ideals, then, Brahmanism gave inspiration to Art; through sacrifices and rituals Art developed and flourished, and affected and elevated a goodly part of the daily life of the times;[3] through its institutions, especially those of the socio-economical and educational nature, it encouraged and preserved the culture of the ages, and kept the spirit of Indian Art and tradition from being degraded or lost.

Economic Factor.

This completes the survey of the religio-social motive in the evolution of Indian Art. The other important motive force in all human affairs is economic necessity. The co-relation between the religions and the economic motive is easily effected in a society like our own, wherein all values tend to be expresed in terms of money. In ancient society, however, where the ideal of self-sufficiency ruled the daily life of mankind; where work was regulated, and living assured, to a large proportion of the community, the merely economic factor had not the force that it has since acquired. Even granting, therefore, that the religio-social motive of the period must have been coloured, probably unconsciously, by economic considerations, we cannot deny altogether the independent existence of religious idealism and devotional inspiration uncontaminated by the economic motive.

But this is not to say that the latter had no place in ancient Indian society. On the contrary, if the religious or spiritual factor could remain so strong, it was because the economic drag had no chance to function. Life was easy, living assured, leisure plentiful, and contentment inevitable. Under those conditions the economic factor must be admitted to be at work, if not quite on the surface, at least in the background. We have already explained the relation between Art, the artist and society, and, the valuation of the artist's labour. We shall discuss the Indian socio-economic organisation, the insti-

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[1] *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 121.

[2] Radhakrishnan: *Hindu View of Life*, pp. 104-127.

[3] cp. Post: pp. 143-144.

tution of *caste* and its particular influence on artistic growth and tradition, under the chapter entitled "Institutions of Ancient India". Here we are concerned only with the economic factor as a motive force in the growth and development, not of life, for that is a colossal task, but of Art only, and that also Indian.

The economic factor entered into life because of man's desire to obtain wealth or money, the commodity with which wealth can be purchased. This desire in man is very strong ; for man must eat to live, and in order to eat, in our present day society, he must have money wherewith to purchase food.

The aid that the economic factor gave Art in India, was that like all other forms of service, the artist was regarded as rendering a service to society as a whole which was duly recognised and recompensed. His status was assured, his daily bread guaranteed, and his value was unquestioned.[1] His work or his vocation, was his *Dharma*, on the due discharge of which depended both his spiritual salvation and material prosperity. His material needs provided for, the artist had no occasion to degrade his Art to please individual fancy or whim, as is often the case with artists who work to please patrons. Most ancient Indian Art was not the court Art, and most Indian artists were not under the direct patronage of the court, or the aristocracy. Painters, architects, masons, sculptors and engravers, all had their separate castes, to which they belonged, and which regulated for them their scales of payment, hours of work, period of apprenticeship and many other affairs, reminding one of the guild system of the Middle Ages These castes or guilds regulated the affairs of each Art and craft, and preserved the traditional forms and motifs, and within its fostering care the Art and craft progressed.

Indian Art is an hierarchical and traditional Art it must not be forgotten, hence this system worked very successfully.

If a chaitya, stupa or temple was to be erected, these artisans, skilled both by training and heredity, were summoned. To the chief artist or architect, the design and decoration were entrusted, which was not difficult ; for, the artist had to perform his task within the limits of the shastras and traditions. Once that was decided on, the builders and carvers were left to themselves to decorate according to the recognised motifs of the ages.

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[1] Muzumdar: *History of Education in Ancient India*, p. 43

> "The master masons constructed always according to the methods of their time with the motifs which their ancestors had transmitted to them"

says Dubreiul.[1] So that besides payment, the patron or donor, did not interfere with the progress of the work, and did not expect the workers in any form to flatter him, inscribe his name in decorative script, or use his head as one of the models, as was common in the Greek and Renaissance Art, and even in Moghul Art.

The economic factor thus aided the progress of Art by the organisation of society in such an order, that, all services rendered to society by individuals were rewarded by settled convention, which left no "surplus value" to the patron of such works, and therefore bred no discontent, nor allowed Art to be degraded

It thus provided the material background on which the idea of vocations as *dharma* could be duly worked out. The notion of work as a degrading servitude, having no other incentive than the economic reward, is absent. The worker had the fulfilment of his being through his work,[2] because the *Gita* had enjoined that one obtains perfection or spiritual advancement only if one does one's duty in the proper spirit of non-attachment. The worker desired to create whatever he did to the best of his ability, for he was dominated by *bhakti*. Specialisation was of such a character, that it had not robbed the worker of his pride in his craft.[3] Both pleasure as well as recreation were afforded to him in his labour, which was to him also self-expression.

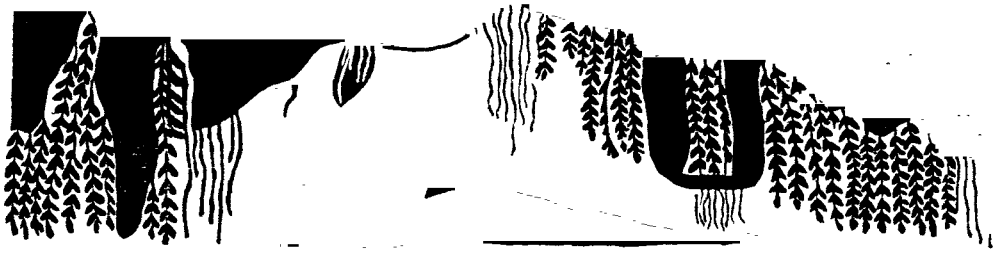
Thus far, and thus only, did the economic factor serve as a motive force to the development of Art. The aim of ancient society, not being what seems to be the only aim of modern society, money-grabbing, but spiritual upliftment of the individual, the economic factor as a motive force was not as important as it is now. In our days, because of this mad craze for money-grabbing, either by fair means or foul, one is apt to lose sight of the fact that there are besides the economic urge in man, longings far nobler and more important to the growth of culture or civilisation than the economic urge.

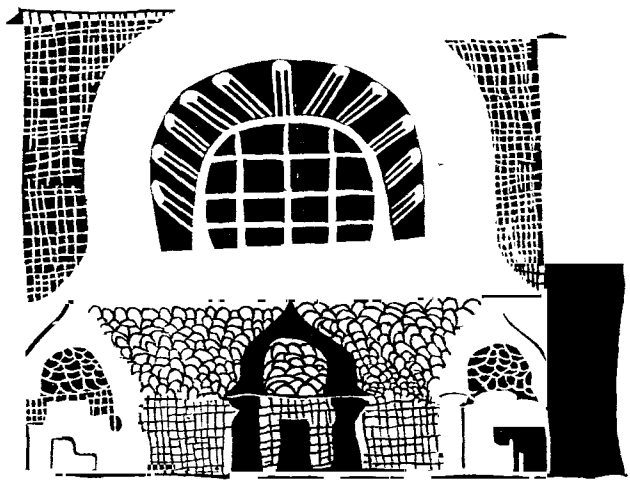
The ancient Indians never lost sight of this fact that money degrades both him who gives and him who receives it as the only consideration. Their whole social order was fashioned on this principle, which throughout aided man's spiritual progress.

[1] *Dravidian Architecture*, p. 5.
[2] Radhakrishnan: *Hindu View of Life*, p. 112.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

Wealth was given its place as one of the four aims of life, because man's native possessive instinct had to be taken into account. But it was never the sole aim, or guiding force in life. In fact in ancient India, the highest kind of work, that of preserving the treasures of spiritual knowledge, was the least paid for.[1] The worker's work was his main reward. A man's worth was therefore not determined by his economic position and opportunity. It is the exaltation of the economic, that leads to a steady degradation of character.[2] While the economic factor was given its right place and due significance in life and society, ancient India had flourished. Now, under the Western influence, it is becoming all important, and India has a different tale to tell.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 1 and 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 15.





CHAPTER V

INSTITUTIONS OF ANCIENT INDIA

Having studied and considered the motive forces, or the dynamic aspect of civilisation in India, let us now consider in this chapter the evolution and working of those social, political, and economic institutions, which are not only the mainstay of the whole social order ; but which, in their collective might, narrowly condition and materially influence the growth of civilisation and the development of Art.

The earliest form of social organisation known to mankind appears to have been the primitive 'horde', where man dwelt together with his fellows merely for self-preservation. Hunting was the common occupation ; what one killed was, probably, for the horde collectively and not for himself alone. Hence under those circumstances the horde appears to be more important than the individual.

Development of Institutions ultimately as forms of Self Expression.

The next stage, generally accepted in the order of social evolution, is the 'pastoral.' Mankind was not yet settled on one definite region, nor had developed any clear idea of real or personal property. As the members of a tribe in this stage had to travel together from one pasture-land to another, a firmer hold of

the common unit than that required in the horde stage must have been needed. Hence originated, probably, the tribal organisation, and with it perhaps the first traces of property. For the members of this moving unit, whatever may have been its form, must have used beasts of burden to carry their necessities of life from place to place. Milk must have been an added article of food; and some members of the tribe may have been allowed to have their own cows or sheep. Real property, however, could not develop in this stage, nor those permanent social organisation and institutions, which are such a clear mark of advanced society.

With the Agricultural stage, which follows, the institutions of individual 'Property' and 'Family' come into prominence. Agriculture is impossible, without the continued possession of a given piece of land in the same hands for a number of years. The offspring of the people first bringing land into cultivation tend to stick to the same ground as far as possible; and so are born and grow these two fundamental institutions of the modern civilised society. Property and family go together, are mutually conditioned and conditioning, and mark a considerable step forward in the evolution of social order. From these, later, there develops the Clan, with the bond of common descent, common habits, common worship and common outlook on life between its members, usually following the male line, and held together by a common ancestor or head.

One remarkable thing noticeable from the above brief sketch of the social development is the importance of the individual and his relation to the social unit in the evolution of the social order. We do not know if man ever lived an absolutely independent life, without contact or communion with his fellows. By the time, however, that he is found making the most primitive social order, the importance of the individual is lost in the preponderating weight of the social unit. In the horde, the horde was of more importance than the individual; and in the tribe, also, the tribe must have been the more important of the two. With the beginnings of agricultural civilisation, the growth of the family, and the evolution of the State as the authority to maintain the established order, the individual begins to gain in importance. The Patre familias is the first important entity, with whom recognition of the rights of the individual commences. The process continues right through social history, the rights of the individual being ascribed at first either to his status or his locus, and regulated by custom slowly crystallising into law, till in our own times the individual seems to have attained complete

emancipation from the bonds of custom and status, and the pendulum seems to have swung almost to the other extreme.

We are not concerned in this work with the stages and landmarks of this process of individual emancipation, and its reaction on the social order, integrity, and efficiency. We need only note that as man thought more and more of his surroundings, he visualised to himself a form of society where he could be happier than he was. Hence, after a certain stage of social development had been reached, the social order, from being the *ad hoc* result of uncoordinated circumstances, became the outcome of deliberate human planning. The attempt was thus consciously made to fashion the environment upon the ideal. Social institutions became the media through which a people's collective consciousness and their common ideals manifested themselves. From being a merely incidental growth, they became the result of deliberate plan and conscious effort, directed to facilitate what were regarded as the most desired and approved condition of living and working to promote the accepted ideals of the given community.

How they react on Growth of Society and Art.

Once evolved and established, these institutions became important influences in the development of a people. They regulated the life and wrought its forms of self-expression. Because they play so important a part in conditioning the self-expression of a people, the necessity to study the institutions that affected the life and arts in Ancient India arises.

Types of Institutions.

Institutions are of various kinds, and may conveniently be classified as Religious, Political, Social and Economical. This division is not a mutually exclusive one, since, in such matters, the several compartments inevitably overlap one another. As the Religious Institutions are probably the earliest to arise, and most considerable in influence, we shall study them first.

Religious.

The main Religious Institutions we propose to examine are, Sacrifices and their rituals, and Monasticism. Connected with these are matters and institutions such as the Status of Woman, and the organisation of Education, that have a religious bearing; but these can be more conveniently considered under "Social Institutions", and so we shall examine them under that head. The main social institution of Brahmanism was the *Varna-Dharma*, or the caste-system. Though religious in origin, this system is in its effect, significance and daily operation

socio-economic. We shall therefore discuss it under the social category.

Sacrifice and Ritual. The sacrifices and rituals of Brahmanism trace their origin right back to the Vedic days, and ever since then, have had an important and integral bearing on the everyday life of the people. How they bring the fine Arts, and consequently the love of beauty, into contact with the pulse of the daily life of the people, we have shown in the last chapter. In this, we shall explain the nature, and emphasise the importance of these sacrifices and rituals, that entitle them to be regarded as institutions, leaving it to Chapter VII to show the connection between Arts and Sacrifices in everyday life.

The Vedic Indians regarded sacrifices as indispensable to the welfare of man. Later, even under the more sophisticated Brahmanism on all important occasions in the life of a man namely birth, initiation, marriage, death, people gathered together their whole families, and with pomp and solemnity performed these sacrifices. The kings performed them before they led the Vedic hosts to battle, invoking the aid of Indra, the leader of the heavenly host to help them in this hour of peril. But, the famous *Ashwamedha* or Horse Sacrifice was perhaps the most spectacular of its kind. Equally magnificent must have been the sacrifice performed before the *Swayamvara* of a maiden was commenced, especially if she were of royal lineage. The sacrifices and rituals were, therefore, an integral part of the life of the people collectively, and even individually. It needed all the reasoning of the *Upanishads*, all the rationalism of Buddhism and Jainism, to abolish the accompaniment of such sacrifices, which took the form of animal slaughter. Except perhaps for Kali worship and Tantric cults, this kind of sacrifice has been almost entirely weeded out of Indian life. But as far as the ritual attendant upon them is concerned, it was not affected. It continued to be as important a part of the daily life and faith of the Indian people as it used to be in the old Vedic days, bringing with it to the family hearth the balmy breath of culture.

Monasticism. The growing formalism of these sacrifices caused, in all probability, the revolt which found expression eventually in Buddhism and Jainism. They objected to the meaninglessness of these forms, that had long since ceased to realise the symbolism the inner meaning of these sacrifices. Hence, on their side, they evolved a purely religious institution, which would embody completely all aspects of their protest-Monasticism. The Buddhist

monasteries were part of the *Sangha* consisting of the laity as well as the *bhikshus*. The former brought Art within the Buddhist hold, and supplied the ideals, worked out the technique, and sometimes produced the artists, too.

Monasteries, during the Buddhist epoch, were scattered all over the length and breadth of Aryavarta as Hindu temples are to-day. Their cultural influence was tremendous, as is evident from the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims. They were little towns in themselves, as one description from the innumerable available will show. The Jetavana Monastery, situated near Pataliputra, was in Fa Hein's time one of the chief places for higher Buddhist education. He describes it thus :

> "There were chapels for preaching and halls for meditation, mess rooms, and chambers for monks, bath-houses, a hospital, libraries, and reading-rooms, with pleasant shady tanks, and a great wall compassing all. The libraries were richly furnished not only with orthodox Buddhist literature, but also with Vedic and non-Buddhistic works, and treatises on the arts and sciences taught in India at the time. The monastery was well situated, being conveniently near the City, and yet far from the distracting sights and noises of the world. Moreover the park afforded a perfect shade, and was delightful place for walking in, during the heat and glare of the tropical sun. It had streams and tanks of cool clear water; and was a favourite resort of the good and devotional people of all religions."[1]

From other sources we gather that neither money nor labour was spared to make these abodes as impressive and beautiful as possible.[2] Most of these Monasteries had attached to them Universities, the fame of which spread as far as China, and brought students from all parts of the world, who made long, toilsome, and dangerous journeys from thence to study at these famous centres. These we will discuss in their proper place, when we describe the educational institutions of Ancient India.

In these Monasteries lived the *Bhikshus*, and here they studied. They were all built on sites marvellous for their natural scenery. Early Buddhism, though hostile to all forms of Art, was very partial to natural beauty, perhaps unconsciously regarding it as an essential of education and of worship. Even the Buddha himself, after sojourn with the various sages in their hermitages, chose for his meditation a spot where nature was at its best.[3]

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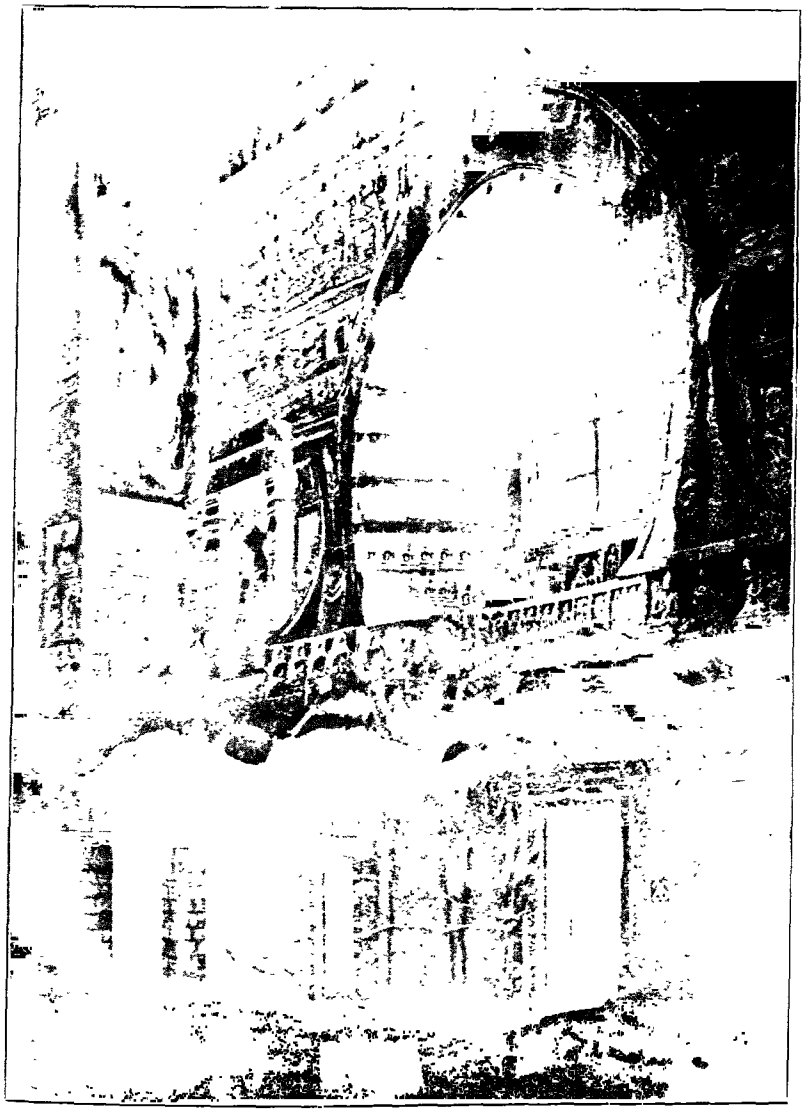
[1] Giles: *Travels of Fa Hein*, p. 46.

[2] The Sri Parvata Monastery described on page 151 bears witness to this statement.

[3] Das: *Educational Institutions of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 58.

PLATE X.

AJANTA MONASTERY

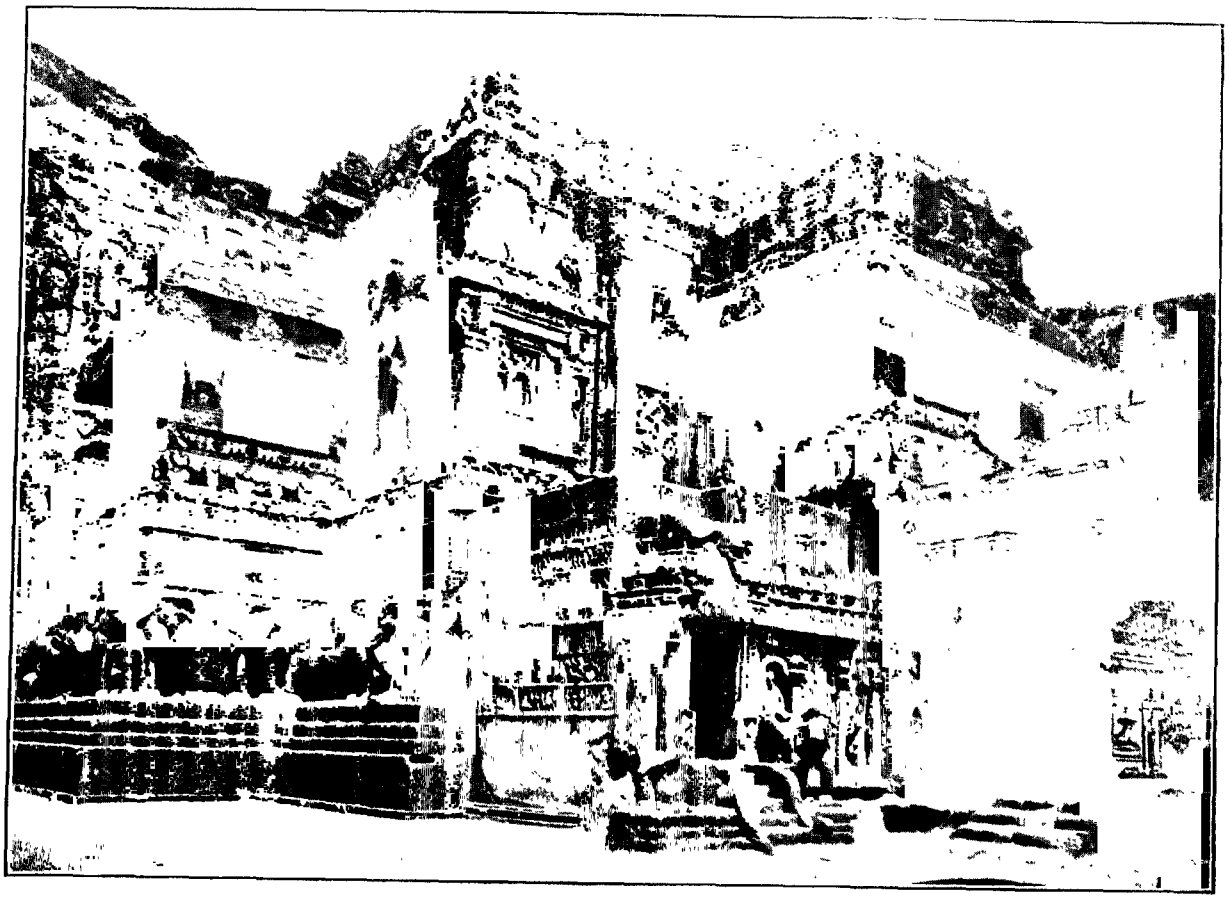


FACADE OF CAVE NO. 26

(By courtesy the Archaeological Department of Hyderabad.)

ELLORA

THE KAILASA



A BRAHMANIC TEMPLE HEWN OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN-SIDE

PLATE XI.

> "There he spied a beautiful spot among the trees, with a pleasant shallow clear flowing river close by, easily accessible with fields, and pastures all around and immediately settled down saying this suits well for effort."

For concrete proof, the existing monasteries such as the ones at Ajanta, Ellora, Karla, Lena, Kennheri may be visited. The first thing that strikes one as he nears the spot is the beauty of the panorama.

The main duty of a monk was to spread his faith. For that he travelled far and wide, and was never settled in one place, except during the monsoon. To pay homage to the relics, and the sacred spots sanctified by the presence of the Master while on earth, was another duty of the Bhikshu. Hence the influence as well as learning of these Monasteries spread to all the peoples and countries visited by its members on pilgrimage, or for the propagation of the Faith. To and fro travelled these monks, not merely through the length and breadth of Aryavarta, but also to Ceylon, Tibet, Bactria, the whole extent of the Kushan Empire, as far as Persia on the west, and China on the east. To these lands they gave of their faith and of their culture ; and from them they very likely learnt and assimilated what was beautiful or useful, and brought it back to their motherland.

The beginning of the peculiar cultural growth in the Buddhist world must be sought in these constant travels of the propagandist monks and pilgrims. With the rise and growth of Mahayana Buddhism, with its love of outward form and ceremonials, Art became its main weapon for the propagation of the Faith. It was the Indian as well as the Chinese *Bhikshus* that carried the images of the Buddha as well as His message to China. This gave to the Chinese fresh ideals and outlook, and to its Art fresh inspiration.[1] Most of these Buddhist Bhikshus were themselves not only scholars well versed in the academic side of Art, but also sculptors and painters. Their leisure hours they spent in expressing their love and devotion for the Master, by thinking of him and his message, till the thought so transported them, that they were impelled to give it concrete expression in Art forms. Exquisite sculpture and painting, visible in their ruins in the monasteries named above, are not the works of one man, or even of one generation. They are the embodiment of the inspiration and ideals of a whole people, through centuries of a common faith and ideals, unfolding to us the history of their spiri-

[1] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*; and Okakaru: *Ideals of Eastern Art.*

tual life in these imperishable and eloquent forms. These Monasteries embody, in stone and paint the records of these ancient people searching for truth, and tell us more incidentally of their lives and ways of thinking and living, in a concise form and more successfully than any written record would have done if preserved.

To many of these Monasteries were at times attached schools. To some primary, to others secondary, and at times even Universities. Of their educational value, we shall speak later. But here it is necessary to add that such a combination of science and practice, faith and learning, made an admirable basis for the cultivation of the Arts.

The Jains had Monasteries which were similar to those of the Buddhists and hence no separate treatment is necessary. Besides, they never wielded so much power as the Buddhist and therefore only aided the development of Art to a small extent, which has already been shown in the last chapter.

To Buddhism, then, and particularly to its institution of the pilgrim monk and scholastic monastery, we owe mainly the rebirth and development of Art, which adorns the classic age of Indian History. Other religious institutions even of the Buddhists, do not affect Art and life so intimately, and so we need not be detained with them, and may pass on to the next main group of institutions namely, Political.

Political Institutions

Political Institutions, besides the *King* and *Court*, include all others that have any connection with the goverance of a people. With all these we need not bother, as they do not directly influence Art. The *King*, the *Court* and *Aristocracy*, and the Institution of *Local Self Government*, are the only ones which need be considered because of their bearing on Art.

Patronage in Relation to Art.

For Art to flourish, its proper appreciation and understanding is always essential. Public opinion can make an artist or mar him. Appreciation of Art is perhaps possible for all, given a proper Art education to the public. But direct encouragement so as to aid Art to develop is always the work of the leisured, cultured and moneyed classes. It is generally the result, not only of spiritual freedom, but material freedom, prosperity and wealth. It is these that mother the artistic inspiration of a people, give it food and impetus, and thus nurse the growth of idealism. Whenever we find Art flourishing, we find it follows upon a historical period, of victory, of colon-

isation, which had added to the wealth of the people. Reading back into history one may account for this phenomenon as due to the awakening of national consciousness and self confidence. The Great Age of Pericles in Greece follows closely upon the defeat of the Persians, and the formation of the Pan Hellenic League of Delos by which Athens made her freedom secure and coffers full. The glories of the Elizabethan age follow the defeat of the Armada, while the victories of the Roi Soleil account for the Grand Siecle of France.

Monarchy. Where there is wealth there will be patronage of Art. With the rise of the Mauryan Empire in India, wealth and patronage, the two foundation stones for a cultural florescence, were readily provided. When the Emperor Asoka made his royalty a weapon to propagate Buddhism, the golden age of Buddhist Art in India began. The King was always an important factor in ancient India. Held to be a pattern of goodness and virtue, he became the model for the people. He set the fashion, and with a word or a gesture, made and un-made the greatness of his age. Chandragupta and his grandson, are entitled to every credit in making Buddhist Art the marvel of centuries to follow. The Maurya empire, aided by the wisdom of Chanakya, brought peace to Aryavarta; and with peace and good governance came the fruits of material prosperity. Asoka maintained this, and brought the aid of spiritual force to accomplish the artistic renaissance in his age. He became a Buddhist and with him Buddhism became the state religion of India. For Asoka had a mighty Empire, and this he naturally desired to adorn. He had also a great religion which he wanted to spread, and popularise in the simplest and most easily intelligible forms that could be devised. Masons, builders, architects and craftsmen from all over the length and breadth of Aryavarta, as well as from Gandhara, Bactria, and Persia, were gathered together to build thousands of *stupas*, *viharas*, *chaityas* and the monolithic lats, which conveyed the message of the Emperor, and the law of his Master, to all the dwellers of his vast empire.

The kings in ancient India were very well educated. Not only were they trained in the art of war and the use of arms, but their education included religious as well as secular and liberal learning. The disciplining of the senses, and the development of all the varied faculties of the human mind, were attended to in a prince's education as set forth in the *shastras*. This is, of course, an ideal scheme;

how far the actual corresponded to this we cannot definitely say. Instances quoted will show that these ideals were often realised.

A king was from the Kshatriya class, and hence his first duty was to defend the people ; therefore, his first training was of war and defence.

> "Besides these, the curriculum of royal studies, according to Aswaghosa, comprised a number of subjects. The Vedas, sacrifices, archery, training of elephants and horses; running, jumping, massaging, music, dancing, and the art of playing on a tambourine, the art of playing on the conch, sculpture, painting, sewing, weaving, sealing, wax-work, making of flower garlands, examination of precious stones, grammar, literature, the origin of writing, eloquence, rhetoric, the study of origins, hereditary, and eugenics, astronomy, computation, interest, the art of love and laughter, conjuring, tricks, chess, dice etc."[1]

This list, which, it will be noticed, gives due prominence to Arts, agrees in the main, says Das, with that found in the *Lalita Vistara* and compares well with those in Jain texts as the curricula of studies of Mahavira.

We have other authorities besides to prove that Art was an essential part of the training received by every prince in India. From the list given in the Mahabharata, besides other accomplishments mentioned, are also named music, poetry, writing and painting.[2] Arjuna while in concealment became a teacher of music and dancing to a king's daughter. In the *Ramayana*, while describing the qualifications of Rama, the author says "He has well mastered music and philosophy, he is profoundly proficient in music".[3]

The Sakya Prince, Siddhartha, also, besides his other qualifications, "delighted in song, music and dance".[4] Kamandaka, in his *Nitisara* says,

> "the King who daily receives a proper training in the 64 Kalas, like dancing, singing, music etc., daily improves his position like the moon in the lunar fortnight".[5]

From all these we find that the Arts were an important part of a prince's education. Now we will try and see how far historical evidence supports this ; and for this we shall first take the Kings who were artists themselves.

Of the Artist Kings, the outstanding historical example is,

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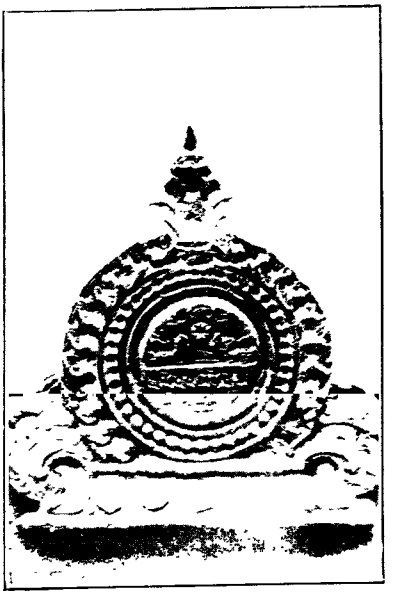
[1] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 288.
[2] Mahabharata XIII. 4-3-5 from Das, *Ed. Syst. of the A. Hindus*, p. 268.
[3] Yudhakanada, 32nd Sarga, from Das, *Ibid.*, p. 270.
[4] Barnetts 81. Antagada Dasao—from Das, *Ibid.*, p. 275.
[5] Nitisara Sk. 61 from Das, *Ibid.*, p. 286.

PLATE XII.



(a) A torso of the Emperor Kanishka

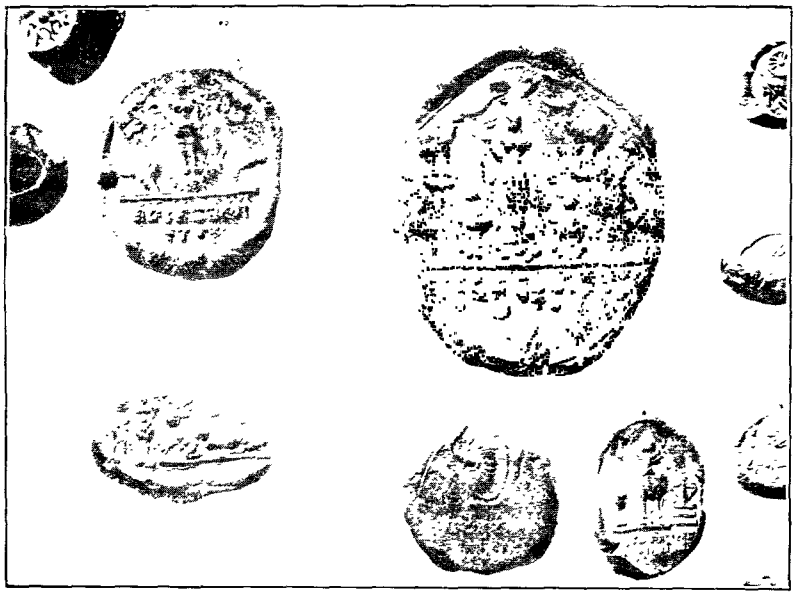
(b) A seal from Nalanda.



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PLATE XIII.

SEALS FROM BHITA



Observe The 'Motif' of Luxmi rising from ocean

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.*)

Samudragupta. He was a poet, singer, as well as a renowned lute-player.[1] He is said to have put to shame both Kasyapa and Narada. Some of his coins were stamped with the effigy of the Emperor playing on a vina.

Bana tells us that Sri Harsha of Kanouj was a poet of no mean ability, and outshone all the geniuses of his age.[2] He is also stated to have taken part in dramatic performances.[3]

Relying on an inscription, Dubreuil describes Mahendrabarman of Kanchi (618 A.D.) as one who glorified poetry and music.[4] The famous Pallava King[5] was an artist and an ideal patron of Arts.

Harsha of Kashmere was the embodiment of all sciences, a great poet and an expert singer. Even to this day, if one of the songs he composed is heard, tears roll from the eyelashes, even of his enemies. From his own uncle he took lessons in music and for his science gave a lac of gold dinars. Harsha himself used to teach the dancing girls of his palace how to act.[6] Historical evidence therefore is also ample to justify our statement.

Trained thus, how could the princes of India help being patrons of Art? Kingship was thus the refuge of all artists. The Court, the palace, the capital, all received their attention, and marvellous works were produced in consequence, which excited admiration. Megasthenes in the Mauryan days, the Chinese pilgrims of a few centuries later, even Al Beruni, who had themselves come from civilised centres, were amazed at Indian creations.

The Court and Aristocracy.

Allied with Royalty, the institution of the Court and the Nobility helped to foster and promote artistic talent in every form. The Courts of the great Emperors used to be filled with cultured and refined courtiers and nobles, who formed the Aristocracy of ancient India. It is a pity we have no more detailed and authentic descriptions of them, apart from references in the literature of the times. From the plays of Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti, and from Bana's description in the *Harsha-Charita*, we may reconstruct a picture of these courts for ourselves. The frescoes of Ajanta provide a background, especially the Persian embassy fresco, and that describing the marriage of prince Siddhartha. From the dancing exhibition portrayed in *Malvi-*

[1] Allahabad Inscription Line 27. Gandharva Lalitaih from Das *Ibid.*, 294.
[2] Cowell and Thomas: *Harsha Charita*, p. 58.
[3] Panikar's *Sri Harsha*, p. 68.
[4] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 298.
[5] Rajatarangivi VII. *Ibid.*, 941-42; 1117-18, 1640-1641.
[6] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 301.

kagnimitra, from the frequent references to painting and portraiture in Sanskrit literature, from the criticisms of these by various courtiers, we see, that not only the King, but his courtiers also, were well versed in arts, and very probably practised them too.

In India there was no landed or hereditary aristocracy until the rise of the Rajputs at least. The merchant princes of Ancient India had no doubt immense wealth, as is witnessed by the example of the one who bought the *Jeta Vana* for the Buddha's stay. As in the course of their commerce these merchants were in all probability obliged to travel far and wide, they must have acquired a taste and culture, all the more rich, being so varied. There was, however, an aristocracy of intellect, hereditary because of the caste-system.

Each King collected round him as many of the learned and cultured men of the day as he could ; and each Court had its 'jewels' perhaps all not so illustrious as the "nine jewels" of King Vikramaditya, which included Kalidasa and Varaha-Mihira. The courtiers lived in great style ; and their houses were modelled on the same principle as the King's. From the *Toy Cart* R.C. Dutt[1] gives us a description of the household of a rich man of perhaps the 2nd Century B. C.

> "The outer door is pretty, the threshold is coloured, flowers and garlands are hanging over the gate, and the doorway is a lofty arch. On entering the first Court, a line of white buildings are visible; the walls are covered with stucco, the steps made of various stones, and crystal windows looking down on the streets of the City. Inside the second Court are carriages, oxen, horses, and elephants fed with rice and ghee. The third Court contains the assembly hall, where visitors are received; in the fourth, there is music with dancing, and in the fifth is the kitchen. In the sixth Court live artists and jewellers and in the seventh is an aviary. Behind the house is a lovely garden also very artistically described, so also in front."

A similar and alluring description is also given of the abode of Vasantasena the heroine ; and surely the courtiers and merchants of famous Ujjaini could hardly have dwelt in less elaborate houses. In Kalidasa's *Meghadhuta* the description of the Yaksha's house may be an imaginative picture of an Ujjaini courtier's house.

The Mauryas (322 B. C. to 184 B. C.), the Sunghas (184 B. C. to 175), the Kushans (78 A. D. to 220 A. D.), the Andhras and the Guptas (320 A. D. to 510 A. D.), all gave their quota to the development of Art. It is because of this, that we find Indian Art soaring so high and remaining at that level for so many centuries afterwards. The Mauryas saw the rebirth, the Kushans and Andhras the deve-

[1] Dutt: *Civilisation of Ancient India*, Vol. III, p. 469.

lopment, and the Guptas the full flowering of the Indian genius; the heyday of every form of artistic expression and learning.

It is a pity that we have not more detailed and authentic account of the lives and influence of these monarchs and their courts, on the development of the arts, as we have of the days of Akbar and Jehangir, for example; for, these monarchs were some of them scarcely less munificent than the Moghuls in their patronage of Indian culture as already shown.

Local Government. Apart from the influence of the Court and nobility, the system of Local Government had an important bearing on the preservation of Art traditions and their independent development. India is a land mainly of villages, and each village was, until very recently completely self-sufficient and self-governing. These villages were hardly ever affected by the changes of emperors or dynasties that governed the country as a whole. Their own life and work social or artistic continued uninterrupted. Even when the central authority was in a turmoil, and law and order were temporarily suspended, these village communities carried on their peaceful existence and ordinary avocations without the least disturbance. They maintained and developed the arts, and preserved the traditions mainly by means of their hereditary guilds. Hence, the artistic spirit in Ancient India never really came to a standstill, even in the worst conditions, till the Mahomedan conquest.

After that a different atmosphere prevailed in Hindoostan. The reasons for that are not our concern, but it may be added that the quick revival of the arts under the Moghuls was very probably due to the continuance of this local talent, preserved by the local independence, which, when given an opportunity, again came to the fore-front in a very short period.

Social and Economic Institutions. The most important social institution that is discussed here is the *Varna Dharma* or the Caste System. It is still in existence, and has a vital bearing on the life of the people. In this group of social institutions we also include the Educational System of Ancient India, the 'Status of Woman' and the Institution of Slavery. Other social institutions have not much direct influence on Art, and so need not be examined by us.

Varna Dharma. The Indian 'caste system' has a very bewildering growth and development. It affects this subject only in so far as the caste system provided each man with a definite station in life, and a certain means of livelihood. He was also assured

adequate leisure, which made the cultivation of Art possible. The main defect with our modern social system seems to be that, under the stress of universal competition, most of our energy is devoted to the struggle for existence. The result is that we hardly have time or energy left to do other things. Leisure, which is the basis on which the arts and graces of life rest, is not available in sufficient quantity, or to a sufficiently large class. Hence work, one's occupation, becomes drudgery, and loses all its charm. Another peculiarity of our modern commercial society is that it pays certain occupations well, and others miserably. The artist falls within the latter category. Under such conditions real Art of a high order can scarcely hope to flourish. Now let us see how the ancient Indians tackled these problems.

Society was divided into four main castes. The origin of these castes is racial with a tinge of occupational division added on at a later stage. Racial, because *Varna*, or colour, was the first basis of distinction between the Aryans and Dasyus, and occupation became the second. The whole Aryan society was divided into the priests, the warriors, the tillers of the soil, and the menials. The three upper strata were called the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, and the Vaishya; while the fourth and lowest was the Shudra.

These occupations were at first not mutually exclusive. In fact, very often the head of the Aryan joint family was all three combined in one. As times went on, the sacrifices became numerous and their rituals elaborate, so that to perform them properly, special study and practice were necessary. Hence arose the importance of the Brahmins as professional priests, who, in the *Brahmanas*, assume to themselves the sole privilege of knowing and performing the sacrifices. The same tendency to specialisation in war gave birth to the Kshatriyas, and that in production and distribution to the Vaishyas.

In this manner caste distinctions commenced and exclusiveness set in. As it became more pronounced, new castes came into existence, often caused by the illegal unions formed by the members of existing castes. For these children of such illegal unions could belong to the caste neither of the father nor of the mother, and hence a new caste had to come into existence. Geographic differences also led to the multiplication of castes, while the growth of new occupations tended in the same direction, till almost every profession and occupation had its special caste which regulated its affairs. Thus came into being the castes of artisans, such as those of the goldsmith, blacksmith, builder, charioteer, painter, and so

on. The son was apprenticed to the father or any other man of the same calling or guild. There he learnt the profession and followed in his father's footsteps, acquiring in each succeeding generation, a wider experience and greater skill than the last specimen of each Art or craft.

Another effect of this system was that even at the time of the decline of Art, the technique acquired at the highest period remained. Art, therefore, in its worst days, did not decline so completely as to be lost for ever. Fresh inspiration easily revived it, till within a short period it again reached a very high level, as with the Moghuls. The same may be said of modern painting and perhaps of modern Indian dancing. Both these Arts had fallen into sad decay and degeneration until a generation ago. A revival has set in of late, growing with such rapidity that the belief in the innate genius of the people, undestroyed by centuries of stagnation, becomes irresistible.

Economic aspect of Caste.

Besides this social aspect reacting on Art, the Caste System has an economical aspect, which is equally important. It answers for us the question we raised with regard to the artist's position in ancient Indian society. The economic basis, Coomaraswamy tells us, was to

> "take from each according to his ability, and to give to each according to his wants".[1]

By keeping to their hereditary vocations, individuals, besides rendering to society a service, themselves had a definite occupation. Each son followed the profession of his father, and hence no chance of unemployment was left, because work was assured. This work was of such a nature that society had need of it, so that man's labour was adequately recognised and duly paid for. The rest of a workman's or artist's time was leisure, wherein other activities of life could be cultivated, or one's own profession could be improved. Life was never solely a struggle for existence. Human labour never lost its dignity, and was never mechanised or degraded. The worker was never reduced to the position of a mere tool. Rather one's work in the appointed sphere of life was looked upon by man as his *Dharma*, and to do that properly became self-expression. Work was a pleasure ; the worker enjoyed doing it, and so naturally worked better. His creative instinct was given the fullest scope, so that even a craft was at times raised to the level of an Art, and it became difficult to distinguish between the two.

[1] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 2.

The same tendency of specialisation in work, with the utmost concentration on each piece, was emphasised by that other aspect of the *Varna Ashrama*, or the "caste and stage system". Shakespeare sings of the seven stages in the life of a man. The Indian seers and law-givers have prescribed four. Just as each caste had its allotted function, so had each stage in life. The youth and adolescent studied; the adult worked and maintained the established order. The mature or middle aged retired from active life to attend to the needs of the spirit and the succeeding generations; and the aged renounced all worldly pomp and circumstance to meditate on the changeless spirit of a changing world. *Dharma* or duty, *Artha* or wealth, *Kama* or desire-fulfilment and *Moksha* or the search for the final emancipation of the soul, may well serve as mottoes for each of the above-named stages in life respectively. Given the ground plan of society based on functional caste, and given the cross section made by the various stages in life, it was inevitable that each department of life spiritual, economic or artistic, should, as it did, receive its due attention. Art was thus fostered and encouraged by the social system of Ancient India.

Recapitulating the services rendered by this socio-economic institution of caste to Art, we find :—

Firstly, with the four-fold division, there came into existence a special caste in society, whose functions were those of the teacher and the priest. This class naturally tended to encourage, develop, and propagate the culture of the ages to the succeeding generation. To this class we owe the *Brhamans*, *Dharmashastras*, *Artha Shastras*, and many other important scientific works, that tell us much about the culture of the past. The other castes particularly the warrior and the mercantile, gave more substantial encouragement and effect to these teachings of the priestly class, so that artistic creation never lacked for patronage or appreciation.

Secondly, the principle of hereditary occupation increased the worker's skill, prevented unemployment, and gave the artist a secure status in society.

Thirdly, division of labour led to increased efficiency, though it was never purchased at the expense of a man's soul.

A high level of work was always maintained due to hereditary endowment, and even at the times of lowest ebb and decline of Art, the technique and traditions were never thoroughly lost but were preserved so that on that foundation the new could be built; hence, was possible a renaissance of Art. Thus to the Art and cul-

ture of India, the institution of *Varna Dharma* has rendered a valuable service.

Educational Institutions of Ancient India.

There are three words in ancient Sanskrit literature which have a meaning similar to the modern term education.[1] These are *Siksh*, meaning to learn (teach) to recite ; *adhyayana* to go near ; *vinaya* to bring out inborn faculties, or to lead one's self in a particular manner. Prabodha or enlightenment is the result of education. For

> "learning brings on Vinaya (development of inborn faculties, or modesty) which in its turn, enhances the worth of man."[2]

The main objects of ancient Hindu education were, the acquisition of knowledge, the inculcation of social duties, training in religious rites, and above all the formation of character. Besides an all round development of the mental and physical qualities, education was also designed to prepare man for the life to come, by recommending a rule of life in conformity thereto. This was first to be done by the study of the *Vedas* and other religious literature. Besides the four *Vedas*, the other branches of knowledge, cultivated by the ancient Hindus, were Literature, sacred and secular Grammar and Phonetics, Exegetics and Metrics, Logic and Philosophy. *Itihasa* (History) *Vartha* (Economics) *Dandaniti* (Science of Government) *Dhanurveda* (Science of war), Astronomy, Law, Medicine, and Mechanical and Fine Arts of all descriptions.[3]

Having acquired all these, man's education was not complete ; for then he had to strive to attain the highest form of knowledge, namely *para-vidya*, or that knowledge through which ultimate reality is known. In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, Narada, who is a seeker after truth, says to his teacher to be

> "I have studied, most revered sir, the Rig Veda, Yajurveda, the Samaveda, the Atharvaveda, as fourth, the epic and Mythological poems as fifth Veda, grammar, necrology, arithmetic, divination, chronology, dialectics, politics, and theology, the doctrine of prayers, necromancy, the art of war, astronomy, snake-charming and the fine arts, these things most revered sir, I have studied. Therefore am I, most revered sir, learned indeed, in the Scriptures (Mantrarit) but not learned in the Atma (Atmavit). Yet I have heard from such as you, that, he who knows the Atma vanquishes sorrow. I am in sorrow.

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[1] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 18.
[2] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
Muzumdar: *History of Education in Ancient India*, pp. 101-102.

Lead me then over, I pray, to the farther shore that lies beyond sorrow."[1]

This highest knowledge, it is obvious, all men could not acquire. Hence education was for them a life process. Another equally important principle of Hindu education was to discover the fitness of the pupil to receive, as well as his natural aptitude before imparting any form of knowledge. "Rather die with learning than plant it on a barren soil"[2] says the *Chandogya Brahmana* and this principle was rigidly kept

The result of education was to give the recipient a good character and good behaviour.

"Conduct" Manu tells us "is the highest virtue as inculcated by the Smriti, and Surti. Devoid of conduct, a Brahmana does not obtain the merit of reading the Vedas. Possessed of good conduct, he reaps the entire fruit (of his study)".[3]

Good conduct means self-restraint. "A Brahmana who knows only Gayatri, but who is thoroughly self-restrained, is better than he who knows the three Vedas (but) who is not self-restrained, who eats all (sorts of) food and sells everything (that is prohibited things)".[4]

Self-discipline was another ideal to be achieved by education.

"Oh Yaksha, listen, high moral character is undoubtedly the only valuable qualification for being a Brahman, not so much race nor learning. Character should be scrupulously cultivated by all and in particular by the Brahmans.....a Brahmana without good conduct is less than a Sudra."[5]

"A conquest does not make a hero, nor studies a wise man. He who has conquered his senses is the real hero. He who practices virtues is really wise."[6]

For this purpose a life of strict discipline was prescribed for the student. He had to shun sensual pleasures and lead a simple, austere life.[7] To this he was inspired by the high ideal before him, that of his teacher with whom he lived in very close contact.

These were some of the ideals of education. Let us now observe what practical form they took. The Brahmans, Buddhists and Jains, all had their educational traditions and institutions, all mainly based

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[1] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus, Mundakopanishad*, VII, p. 20.

[2] N. M. Muzumdar: *History of Education in Ancient India*, Manu II, p. 113.

[3] *Manu*, pp. 1-108.

[4] *Manu*, II, p. 118; *Das, Ibid.*, 25.

[5] Mahabharata, Banaparva, 312 Adhyaya, from Das *Ibid.*, 24 and Muzumdar, pp. 33-35.

[6] *Vyasa Samhita*, IV, 59-60.

[7] Muzumdar: *Ibid.*, p. 84.

on the Brahmanic ideals. Their course of learning were also similar, except that in each, particular attention was paid to their special shastras.

In the Brahmanic system, the main influence on a boy up to the age of five or eight was the home ; and therein, mainly the mother. After 8, and up to the age of 16, he was initiated into the caste that is, invested with the sacred thread and received into the caste, and so received his "second birth" at the hands of his spiritual preceptor, or *Acharya*, with whom he later on studied the Vedas and the sacred lore.[1] Perhaps the child was taught writing and arithmetic even before the initiation.[2]

After the *Upanayana*, or initiation ceremony, the student became a permanent resident with his teacher till his course of studies was completed. In India of the post-Vedic age, there were various institutions where these students went to complete their education. There were the Vedic schools, special schools, and individual teachers[3] who admitted to their family as many pupils as they could manage. At the head of some of these schools, were the *Parishads*[4] or assemblies of learned Brahmins who formed a sort of an ecclesiastical synod, that gave decision on all points connected with the Brahmanic religion. The Brahmins who formed this synod were men proficient in different branches of study and authorities on their special subjects. A student was also appointed a member of this institution, so that in it may be traced the germs of the later University system or the nucleus of a University.

Other institutions for learning were the hermitages of *rishis*, or learned men retired from life. These appear to have come down from the Vedic age. These hermitages were beautiful places as the descriptions in the epics (Kanva's in Mahabharata), as well as word-pictures of classic dramatists show. Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti loved to reproduce these beautiful sylvan retreats, and the simple and austere life led by the students there, in harmony with animate and inanimate nature.[6]

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[1] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 35. 67 Satapatha-Brahmana.

[2] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[3] Muzumdar: *Ibid.*, 73; Das: *Ibid.*, Ch. V.

[4] Muzumdar: *Ibid.*, p. 73; R. C. Dutt: *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, Vol. I, p. 163.

[5] Das: *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

[6] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 60; Das: *Ibid.*, p. 59.

One such description quoted by Das we will reproduce here, for it gives the atmosphere perfectly.

> "Trees of wonderful fruits and foliage enhanced the beauty of that holy spot, where fountains and rivulets of crystal flow, run bubbling into sacred pools. Herds of deer were found to roam about, and birds of beautiful plumage were heard to join their melodious notes in a chorus of harmony."

These hermitages were indeed, as effectual for the promotion of culture as the monasteries of Medieval Europe. In fact,[1]

> "The most wonderful thing that we notice in India is that there the forest, not the town, is the fountain head of civilisation. It is the forest that had nurtured the great ancient sages of India, the Vedic and the Buddhistic. Not only the Vedic rishis, but the Lord Buddha also preached in many woods of India. The Royal palace had no room for him, it was the forest that took him into its lap. The current of civilisation that flowed from the forest inundated the whole of India."

It is a peculiarity of the Indian system of education that the teacher was an integral and indispensable part. The *Upanishads* recognise the futility of self-study. A teacher is indispensable.[2]

> "Not by self study is the Atma realised, not by mental power or by amassing much information. Let him in order to understand this, take fuel in his hand and approach a Guru who is learned and dwells entirely in Brahman."[3]

The students admitted by the Guru were of two sorts. Those who wanted to learn a prescribed course with a view to get proper knowledge of their duties as householders' ; and those who wanted to be teachers or hermits themselves. For the latter, of course, the period of study was for life, but for the former the period depended upon a student's vow as well as aptitude. Generally, twelve years were regarded as the period necessary to learn the *Vedas* and the customary lore of the time.

During studentship a pupil resided with his teacher, paid him all deference, rendered him all menial service. He led the life practically of an ascetic, abstaining from all pleasure and luxury. He must refrain from honey, flesh, meat, perfumes, chaplets of flowers, black powder for the eyes, sandals, umbrellas, dancing, music and gambling He begged alms for his teacher, and ate what food was given to him after his teacher had eaten. He tended the sacred fire looked after the teacher's house, and served him by word, mind, and deed.[4]

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[1] *Tagore Vishwa Bharati*, April 1924, p. 64.
[2] *Katha Upanishad*, II-8, Das, 63.
[3] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 63.
[4] Muzumdar: *Ibid.*, Appendix IV, p. 121; Das: *Ibid.*, p. 83.

He had to rise early, say his prayers three times a day, bathe, and keep his body clean. His dress was to be of the simplest hand spun silken or woollen cloth.[1] The head was to be shaved except for the tuft of hair on the crown, and the student had always to carry a staff "for the sake of a long life of holiness and of holy lustre".[2]

Mental and moral discipline seems to be the main purpose of this novitiate, for the pupil was recommended to overcome caste pride, desire for fame, sleep, anger, bragging and personal beauty. He had to curb his senses, tongue, appetite, and arms.

The physical side of his development was not neglected either. Working in his teacher's fields and pastures, his body was amply exercised. Walks and contemplation of nature were recommended too.

If a particular Guru was not equal to a specially brilliant student's need, that student went to one of the many Universities that cultivated the Arts and sciences in Ancient India. At the completion of the course, the *Brahmacharin*, after the ceremonial bath, handed back the staff to his tutor, received his blessing, paid his *guru-dakshina*, and returned to his home, there to enter into the life of manhood, and became a householder. In this stage of studentship, men acquired knowledge and understanding of the basic ideals of life, its goal and purpose, of the spirit inspiring all culture. This helped to lay the foundation, well and truly, for a life of understanding and appreciation of all that was truly beautiful round about one.

Accordingly, the life of the individual was divided into three broad stages, corresponding to the three stages in the evolution of the Vedic religion.[3] In the first stage, that is the Brahmacharin's to sum up once again, the mind was opened and disciplined and the body made fit to carry out the orders of the mind. In the second or the *Grahastha Ashram*, the individual put the principles he had learnt into practice and realised their true relation to life and its duties. In the third and fourth *Ashramas*, he turned his attention inwards to recognise the true and intimate relation between the individual and the eternal self, just as the Race itself had done in the days of the Upanishads, Buddhism and Jainism.

Universities of Ancient India.

If the Brahmacharin desired to study further, he went to some of the great Universities for which Aryavarta was so famed. The main Brahmanic Universities were Taxila, Benares and Ujjaini.

[1] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 87.
[2] Das: *Ibid.*, p 83.
[3] Das: *Ibid.*

Taxila. Of the Ancient Indian Universities, Taxila was famous for its renowned teachers and attracted students from all over India. Kings, Brahmins, Merchants, all alike entered its portals, and were treated equally.[1] Except the Chandals,[2] all were admitted to this University without distinction of caste or creed, and studied whatever subject they chose. The University was so well endowed that it took nothing from the students except a nominal students's fee. A pair of sandals, an umbrella, and the students' fee,[3] was all that a student was allowed to bring, whether he was a king's son or a poor man's. Poorer students were allowed to work their way through, if they could not pay the fee, or, were even allowed to pay it after completion of their education.[4] Military and religious training, knowledge of medicine, and occult sciences, were the specialities of this University ; but other subjects were also taught, and very efficiently.

Its fame goes back as far as the Epic times, and it is referred to both in the *Ramayana*, and *Mahabharata*, as a noted seat of learning. In the days of Asoka, Taxila was one of the greatest and most magnificent cities of the East, and enjoyed special reputation as the headquarters of "Hindu learning". The sons of peoples of all the upper classes, chiefs, brahmans, and merchants flocked to Taxila as a University town, in order to study the cycle of 'Indian Arts' and sciences especially medicine.[5] So that Art was not left out of the curriculum of this great University. There were also special schools of painting, sculpture, image-making and handicrafts, besides those mentioned above, at this University.[6]

This was a pattern University and very probably all the others, were based on its lines, so they need not detain us.

Of the Buddhist Universities, thanks to the Chinese pilgrims, we have a much more accurate account. To examine them all, would take us far out of our way. We shall therefore only refer to the most renowned, the brightest gem of the galaxy, the famous University of Nalanda.

Nalanda. The University's splendour was due to the four successive Gupta Emperors, who spared no pains in adorning its

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[1] *Buddhist Studies*, p. 244.
[2] C. Hasambhabhuti Jataga IV, 39—from Das 310.
[3] Dr. R. M. Kergi: *Buddhist Studies*, p. 237.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 239.
[5] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 309.
[6] Muzumdar: *Education in Ancient India.*

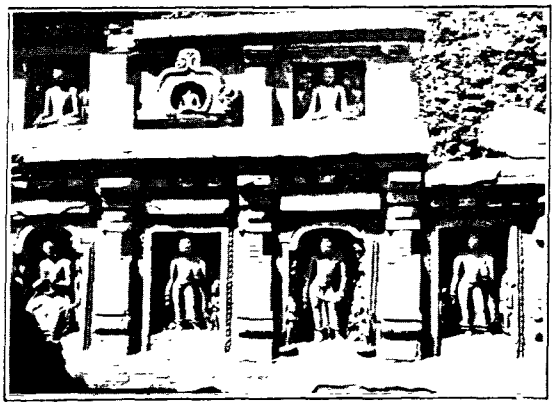
PLATE XIV.

NALANDA

(a) The Excavated site of an Ancient University.



(b) A facade from a wall showing how picturesque the place must have been.

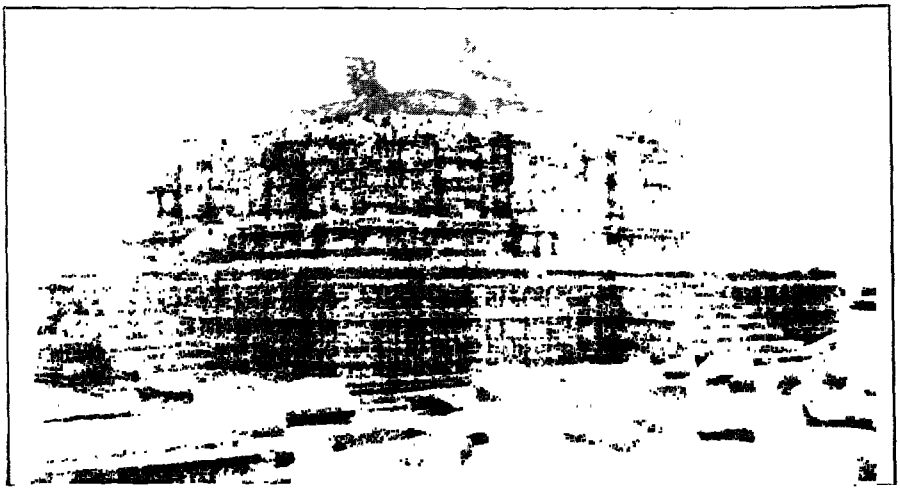


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PLATE XV.



NALANDA



NATYA SHALA KONORAK

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.)

viharas, libraries, assembly halls; hence, its magnificence in its prime may well be imagined.

The University consisted of six monasteries, and monastic colleges, all unrivalled in the grandeur of their architecture.

> "The richly adorned towers, and the fairy-like turrets, like pointed hill tops are congregated together. The observatories seem to be lost in the vapours (of the morning) and the upper rooms tower above the clouds. From the windows one may see how the winds and clouds (produce new forms), and above the soaring eaves, the conjunction of the Sun and Moon, may be observed. And then we may add how the deep, translucent ponds, bear on their surface, the blue lotus, intermingled with the Kieni. (Kanaka) flower of deep red colour, and at intervals, the Amra groves spread over all their shade."[1]
>
> "All the outside courts, in which are the priests' chambers, are of four stages. The stages have dragon projections and coloured eaves. The pearl-red pillars, carved and ornamented, the richly adorned balustrades, and the roofs covered with tiles, reflect the light in a thousand shades. These things add to the beauty of the scene."[2]

We know that Nalanda had a fine library, consisting of three splendid buildings, and besides there were hostels for students. By imperial orders, Hui Lun tells us a special water clock was kept there to determine the right time.[3]

So richly was this University endowed, that food, clothing, bedding, and medicine were supplied abundantly and free, says Huein Tsang.[4] The students residing there numbered 10,000.

There were 1510 teachers, who between them delivered 100 different discourses on diverse subjects every day.[5] All that was taught at Taxila was taught here, with the addition, of course, of all the Buddhist religious literature of both the *Mahayana* and *Hinayana* sections. Copying manuscripts was another occupation practised assiduously.

The cultural influence of this vast institution must have been immense. The scholars it attracted from all over the North, South, East and West of India, as well as the pilgrims from China, amply show that. Amidst these beautiful surroundings, who could help but learn the habit of seeking for beauty everywhere. The cultural atmosphere, the debates to settle intellectual doubts, the close fellowship between the professor and student,[6] the intense cultiva-

[1] Beal: *H. Tsang*, p. 111.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 112.
[3] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 362.
[4] Beal: *H. Tsang*, p. 113; Muzumdar: *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[5] Beal, p. 112.
[6] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 178.

tion of all Arts, must have materially aided the enrichment of the culture of the period. The intellectual aristocracy of India was thus trained in a love of the spiritual and the beautiful; the mind and senses made unconsciously alive to all that was really noble and refined. Such a society could never degrade an artist, nor fail to appreciate adequately his creations. No wonder Art flourished at its best in this Golden Age of Indian History.

Status of Woman in Ancient India.

Status of Woman.

For ingrained appreciation of the artistic and the beautiful, for a proper cultivation of a refined taste, the status and influence of women on society is of the utmost importance. This subject may not perhaps be considered, strictly speaking, as among the socio-economic institutions of a people. Nevertheless, the place assigned to woman in the scheme of a nation's life the role given to her in the drama of the race, the customs and conventions governing her influence, are of the utmost significance in assessing the place of Art in a people's life.

In the *Rig-Veda*,[1] Indra is stated to have said, "The mind of woman brooks no discipline, her intellect has little weight". Yet this does not seem to have been the general attitude of that age towards woman. In fact, two of the Vedic Goddesses described in the *Rig-Veda*, *Usha*, the Goddess of Dawn, and *Vak*, the Goddess of Speech, show that the age recognised both the intellectual as well as the spiritual importance of woman. Das, in his chapter on female education, quotes a list of authorities, where a father is recommended to give his learned daughter to only an equally worthy son-in-law.[2] From the *Shastras* it is evident, that learning was not as a rule denied to women. The position of a woman as wife and mother has always been recognised and duly honoured in Indian society. In fact the power woman enjoyed as mother of sons was so well recognised, that it was the desire of every young married girl to bring forth male children only. According to Manu[3]

[1] *Rig-Veda*, VIII-34-17: Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 222.

[2] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 222

[3] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 83. The glory of motherhood is perhaps nowhere so evidenced as in the Hindu belief that God incarnated as man, born of woman, delighted most in honouring the mother; that *Sati* the female counterpart of Sat, is the essence of all being; that no godhood itself is complete without its female complement. The general conception of woman as wife and mother is

"A master exceedeth ten tutors in claim to honour; the father a hundred masters in right to reverence; but a mother a thousand fathers in right to reverence, and in the function of teacher."

As a wife even her place was assured in the Vedic age ; and time only served to refine it. Certain Vedic sacrifices had to be performed by every citizen, and they could not be performed without the presence of a wife. So essential and indispensable was her presence, that Rama had actually to have a golden image of Sita made, before he could perform the *Ashwamedha* Sacrifice. There were, moreover, certain *mantras* which could not be complete unless recited by the wife of the sacrificer ; also the wife of the sacrificer should recite in a sacrifice, this *mantra*, placing the *Veda* in the hand of the wife, have this *mantra* recited by her.[1]

Apart from being a mother or wife, had a woman an individual status of her own in the ancient Indian Society? Opinion on this subject differs very widely. Yet, we have both historical as well as literary and mythological evidence, to show that where a woman had individuality or character of an exceptional sort, it was duly recognised and honoured. So many of the Hymns of the *Rig-Veda* are said to be given by women such as Viswavara, Lopemudra, Apala, or Saraswati. Again, there are the stories of the lady Gargi, and Maitreiyi, in connection with the philosopher Yajnavalkya; the former, an unmarried lady, the latter the philosopher's own wife. In a learned gathering, where had assembled all the philosophers to discuss the mysteries of life, a lady, who was herself a seeker after truth, gets up in the open assembly and questions Yajnavalkya. The incident is related without the least surprise, thereby showing that the spectacle of women philosophers participating in learned gatherings was not unusual.

Once they had devoted their lives to learning, they studied all that had to be learnt, and vied with sages and philosophers, in arguments, and astonished the latter with their skill. King Janaka whose love of knowledge and deep learning is renowned far and wide in the epic, had evidently chosen for himself a befitting mate, as the following story illustrates. The learned man made up his mind one day, to become a sanyasi. His decision did not meet with the

soft and gracious and beneficent, charming by her sweetness and love, winning by her intuitive understanding and sympathy, ruling and influencing without seeming to govern.

[1] *Aswalayana Srautasutra* (1-11) from Das, *Ibid.*, p. 222. Besides this there are several others taken from Gouil, Grhyasutra, Paraskara Jaimi, given by Das, *Ibid.*, pp. 224-26.

approval of his learned wife; and we are told she succeeded in dissuading him from his resolve after proving to him the superiority of the *Grahasta Ashram* from the *Vedas* and *Shastras*.[1] It must have been a mighty difficult task, with a husband so renowned for his learning, and the *Shastras* nearly always showing the *Sanyasi Ashram* to be a more evolved stage than the *Grahasta Ashram*.

Though the individuality of the woman was thus recognised apart from the status of wife or motherhood. Yet, the normal life recommended to a woman was that of wifehood. And, indeed, it could not have been otherwise in an age when the religious philosophies laid so much stress on the doctrines of *Dharma*.[2] The governing concept of Hindu ethics is vocation-duty, that which binds or holds together. The highest merit consists in fulfilment of one's own duty. It was considered wrong for a man to fulfil the duties of another, rather than his own. To be mothers[3] were women created, *Manu* tells us. Hence that was their special duty in Hindu society. In such a society women could not be allowed to change their vocation, unless in very exceptional cases, and under exceptional circumstances. And what were these exceptional circumstances? The desire for spiritual freedom or self-expression, in the Indian sense, and not ego expression.[4] The sort of desire that the wife of Yajnavalkya, Maitreiyi felt. In other words,

> "The ultimate purpose of social Hindu discipline is that men should unify their individuality, with a wider and deeper than individual life, and escape the all too narrow prison of 'I and mine.' "

When a woman felt the desire for this freedom, then only may she be justified in leading a different existence.

How was a woman qualified to perform best her special vocation of a wife and mother? In Ancient India there were no schools for girls. Instruction was given either by the mother or tutors engaged, or by the women of the household. According to *Manu*,[5] she had to know how to look after the expenses of the house, to keep the house and surroundings clean, and nurse the sick.

The author of the *Kama-Sutra* gives us a more comprehensive account of what a woman was supposed to know. In this scheme more stress is laid on the woman's aesthetic development than in Manu's. Besides the requirements of *Manu*, this writer adds that

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[1] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 231.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 85.
[3] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus*, p. 231.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 85.
[5] Das: *Ibid.*, p. 84.

PLATE XVI.

AJANTA

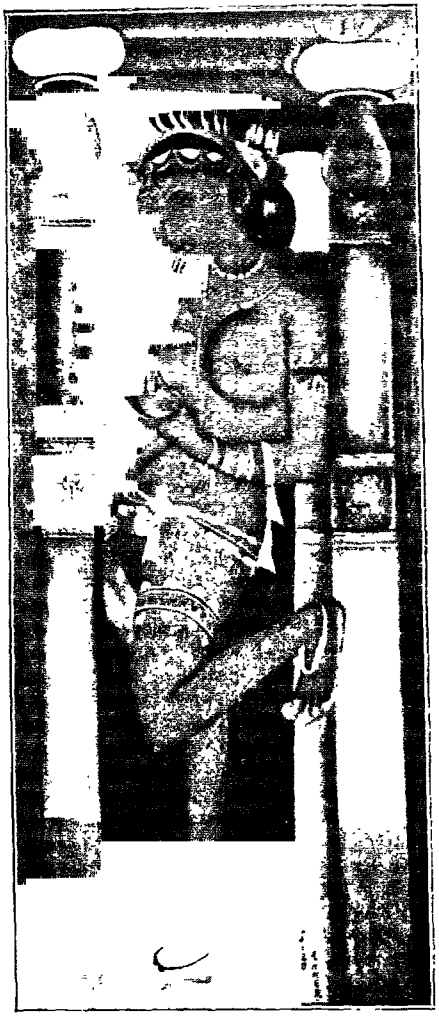
WOMEN IN ANCIENT INDIA



(By courtesy Archaeological Department of Hyderabad.)

PLATE XVII.

AJANTA



(a) The Fan-bearer



(b) A Princess

(By courtesy Archaeological Department of Hyderabad)

a woman should know and study *Kama-Sutra* before she attains youth.[1]

Again a woman should learn in her girlhood alone in private the sixty-four kinds of sexual knowledge.[2] Besides these the sixty-four Kalas[3] and principles of Shastras.

This is a very complete scheme, if ever it was really adhered to. For it includes almost all that is taught to-day, together with the much tabooed sex knowledge in which modern education is so deficient. This scheme was meant to bring out all the individuality of a woman, and develop her personality fully, so that she could be a perfect companion as well as a perfect beloved; and, if necessary could find her fulfilment in single life, even as the writer of the *Kama-Sutra* especially signifies.

A woman gifted with these Arts will by these means live even when her husband is in exile or when she is suffering from some great trouble, or has become a widow or even if she is living in a foreign country (*Kama-Sutra* sl. 16). Has this a reference to a woman's capacity to be economically independent if she so desires?

Music and Dancing. From this scheme of education, two facts attract attention. Music and dancing, which in the Vedic days were accomplishments of both men and women, come to be mainly within the woman's sphere of accomplishments.

Princesses, daughters of noblemen and of rich merchants, all cultivated these arts. To teach these, there were music halls and painting halls attached to royal palaces, in which the queen, princesses, and their attendants, learnt these arts.[4] Arjuna, it must be remembered, while in concealment, performed this service for a princess. In *Malvika Agnimitra* a dancing exhibition is referred to, where the heroine gives a wonderful display of her skill in that Art. Rajyashri, the sister of Harsha, is an historical example of a woman who knew all the fine arts as well as the sciences.[5] In the *Ramayana* we are told that 100 daughters of the Rajarsi Kusanava were well versed

[1] Das: *Ibid.*, *Sukranitisara*, XII, p. 236.

[2] *Ibid.*, 1-13. Das, 238.

[3] Kalas include literary accomplishments, knowledge of domestic arts, culinary arts, knowledge relating to toilet, dress, comforts, luxuries; knowledge of manual arts; knowledge of the scientific arts of music, dancing, painting, drama, etiquette, and of physical exercise. This is the complete scheme of women's education given by Vatsayayana (Das, 245).

[4] Das, *Ibid.*, p. 245.

[5] *Harsha Charita*, Cowell and Thomas, p. 121; Das, p. 248.

in singing and dancing.[1] The wives of Ravana[2] were also highly proficient in dancing and singing. King Virata[3] in the *Mahabharata* had a special *nrityashala* constructed, where his daughters were taught dancing, singing and music. The Yaksha's wife in *Megha-duta* must have been well versed too, for we are told she composed songs with letters of her husband's name.[4]

Besides the above type of women, arts were cultivated by the slave girls and courtesans, the prostitutes and *deva-dasies* who made it their life work, rather than mere accomplishments. Hence their study must have been more exact, and therefore, results more enduring. According to Kautilya and Vatsyayana, these women were to be taught by teachers.

> "Arts such as singing, playing on musical instruments, reading, dancing, acting, writing, painting, playing on instruments like lute, pipe, drums, reading the thoughts of others, manufacture of scents and garlands, shampooing, the art of attracting and captivating the minds of others."[5]

The *deva-dasies* attached to the temple in later times were similarly instructed, and initiated into the arts of dancing, reciting and singing by special teachers.

Courtesans in Ancient India were really an important means of preserving as well as of spreading culture. In spite of their profession, or rather because of it, they were really cultured ladies, artistic to the tips of their fingers, and thoroughly refined in their taste and sentiment. They remind one of the great Heterœ of Greece in her palmiest days, the mistress of Pericles, Aspasia, and the Greek poetess Sappho, who are historical examples of these refined type of courtesans.[6] In Ancient India there were many of this kind. The famous Vasantasena of the *Toy Cart* is a literary counterpart of these lively types, who was highly respected. The author makes a Brahmin fall in love with her, and ultimately marry her, whom the modern society regards as no more than an article of purchase. Sudraka describes her as being

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[1] Das, *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 245, 247.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 247.
[5] *Kautilya's Arthashastras*, p. 155.
[6] Both these women were not within the normal Greek social system for women but still were very important figures. Could we say they represent and illustrate an Aryan tendency in both the Indian and Greeks Society?

"Of courteous manner and unrivalled beauty, the pride of all Ujjain" (Wilson). Ambapali[1] who was the hostess of Buddha, and Salavati[2] of Rajagriha, are historical examples, of this class.

The modern practice of using such women as state spies as in the case of Mata Hari, was also known to the Ancient Indians and widely practised. These accomplished women, we are told, were used as secret service agents ;[3] and hence they must have been well versed in reading, writing, cipher writing, and the art and science of diplomacy. That these women were real artists, and cultivated the fine arts for their own sake, is further substantiated by another remark in the *Kama-Sutra*[4] that these ladies used to hold musical discussions, and critical demonstrations of various arts so as to learn from one another, the real essence and correct representation.

These, then, are some of the ways in which the education of women in Ancient India fitted them for their special vocations in life, whether of the wife, the mother, the courtesan, or *deva-dasi.*

With Buddhism and Jainism we have one more vocation opened to women, that of the *Bhikshuni* or nun, by which learning became a regular profession for women. There were Nunneries where those so inclined could go and learn. In these institutions, they studied scriptures, learnt sciences, and cultivated Art, in the form of singing.[5]

Throughout the period covered in this Thesis, then, Woman exercised an immense influence, not always perceived, on the development of the arts in India, not only by her native love of the beautiful and the refined, but also by special training and in exceptional cases, by life-long practice of the Fine Arts particularly Music and Dancing, Drama and Acting. Later chapters will show in greater detail how this influence made the home beautiful. Here it suffices to add that the social system as a whole in Ancient India permitted, facilitated and assigned a position to woman that helped her to make this contribution.

What an impetus to the growth and development of Art this assiduous and intelligent patronage by woman must have been, and how perfected secular Art must have become, we are left only to imagine, for we hardly have any concrete remains of it. But judging from the secular literature we have, and its quality, and also the heights to which religious Art and technique had reached, we may

[1] & [2] *Vinaya Text*, pt. II, pp. 171 and 172.
[3] *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, p. 25; Das, *Ibid.*, p. 261.
[4] Das, *Ibid.*, p. 257.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

readily conclude that secular Art must have reached an equally high, if not higher standard. In this growth, woman's contribution was of no mean account. She aided both its preservation as well as advancement; and also brought the fine arts within the orbit of daily life.

The last of the social institutions of Ancient India still remaining to be treated relates to Slavery.

Slaves. D. P. Dopson in his Essay on Prehistoric Art says,

> "it is doubtful if a purely agricultural community at any rate unless the institution of slavery was well developed has ever produced great works of art."[1]

Here the slavery referred to by the writer must be that of the Western kind, such as existed in ancient Greece and Rome, and still exists in South America. In India we may say on the authority of the *Cambridge History of India*,[2] that slavery was of a different character. In fact, the growth and development of Indian Art seems to have had very little to do with the institution of slavery. In Greece and Rome, the slaves toiled for their masters, worked on their fields, thus giving the masters leisure to do their civic duties and cultivate the arts. (In Rome however, the Egyptian or Greek slaves were not infrequently the teachers and guides of their master in the arts.) Their whole cultural life, therefore, was founded on the ultimate basis of slavery. In India there was no such condition. The Indian society was so organised that it did not need the basis of slavery either for its very existence, or, for the cultivation of its arts. Indian society, as already explained, was divided into four main classes according to occupations. The three upper classes,—the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas,—while following their hereditary occupation, supplied all the needs of society, material as well as spiritual. Hence, if slaves did exist, they were just lightening the labours of their masters. The Aryan society in Ancient India could have existed just as well without a single slave.

Slaves, however, India had in two different forms. One in the western form, which was a very small minority, probably kept by Kings and Princes and their households as bodyguards and female attendants. The real slaves were the 'untouchables' the Sudras, or the casteless unregenerates. They were, in-

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[1] From *Art and Civilisation*, p. 60.

[2] Vol. I, p. 205.

deed, not owned by the caste people; but they were relegated to occupations regarded as unclean or indecent, which the high caste Hindu would not pursue. These Sudras did not, in the Greek or Roman sense, labour for the physical needs of the upper classes, for their very shadow was considered unclean. Hence Art in India does not owe much to the institution of Slavery. Except perhaps for the 'slave girls' in the royal palaces, who specially cultivated the arts and graces of life, we need not mention it at all.

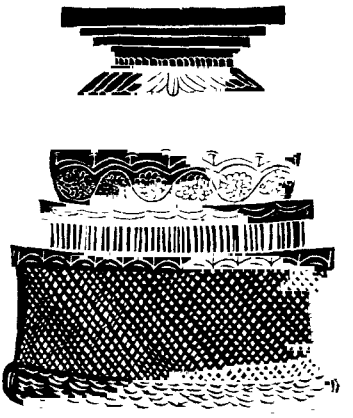
This ends our survey of the influence of the main religious, political, social and economical institutions on the development of the Art in Ancient India. Each institution that we have described has given its particular quota, either in the form of direct contribution to the growth and development of Art, which, had it not been there, would have left the whole Art poorer, or by indirect inspiration and influence. The whole resultant, the artistic expression of the people, is due to the combined action and reaction of all these institutions, motive forces and racial characteristic already described.



PART III

ART IN ANCIENT INDIA





CHAPTER VI

CONCEPTION AND IDEALS OF INDIAN ART

Having reviewed the main influences on the growth and development of Art in India, namely the racial inheritance and the social institutions, we shall examine in this part of the work, the actual working of this heritage, with the motive forces acting upon it, in the several Arts selected for the purpose, and their repercussions on the daily life of the people of that age.

Basic Ideals and Art motifs of Ancient Arts.

If we pause here for a moment, and cast our eyes around the Art history of other peoples of the ancient world, we find that most of their Art, if it is an Art of a people collectively, revolves round certain basic ideals, which develop into the principal Art *motifs* of the age. The ancient Greek Art, for instance, seems to centre round the figures of the principal gods and goddesses of the Greek Mythology, conceived mainly in the image of the idealised man and woman as the Greeks knew or dreamt of. Their Art had thus a naturalism, that ever drew its inspiration from the facts of the life around them. The European Renaissance Art for a long while revolved round the figures of the Madonna and the Christ. Its inspiration was of the spirit, unearthly and unreal, yet striving to model the sordid reality of life on the message and example of the spirit of suffering. The Art *motifs* of the ancient Egyptians appear to be their Pyramids and Sphinxes, and indicates a link with the mysterious and the unknown, as the legends of Hathor, Osiris, and Apis reveal. All these concrete Art symbols recall the common race experience or ideals that gave them birth, and therefore, the Art

centres mainly round them. As Mr. Okakura so ably puts it in his interpretation of the *Ideals of Japanese Art.*

> "Not a few drawings of the plum blossoms but the mighty conception of the Dragon; not birds and flowers but the worship of Death; not a trifling realism however beautiful, but a grand interpretation of the grandest theme within the reach of the human mind the longing and desire of Buddhahood to save others and not itself, these are the true burdens of Japanese Art."[1]

The means and methods of this expression says the same writer, Japan ever owed to China, but for the ideals themselves she has depended upon India.

Let us hasten and see what these lofty ideals of India were, for they seem not only to have inspired Indian Art, but also the ideals of the East, and then, ascertain the principal Art *motifs* to which they gave birth, just as the Japanese ideals evolved the Dragon.

Art Motif. Before we consider the ideals of Indian Art, it is necessary to define what is meant by that term *Art motif.* The ideals of life give rise in the minds of certain artist to certain imaginative forms. At times some of these mental forms are such that in them they seem to embody the quintessence of the racial experience of that particular people. The artist gives the whole form concrete expression, and through that concrete expression, the people at once realise the fullness and intimacy of the experience that *motif* embodies That image or form thus becomes a symbol for the people and soon develops into a popular design, on the pattern of which numbers of other images are made. In ordinary parlance, this design, or pattern, or symbol, is spoken of as an *Art motif.* It may not be an image, it may be the dragon, as was the case in Japanese Art, or it may be a Sphinx as in Egypt, or even a decorative *motif* like the lotus in the Indian Art.

Our use of the term is slightly different and really wider. We use the word *Art Motif* at the stage at which the ideal ripens into the mental image. This mental image is really the *art motif* proper. Its concretisation is merely its translation into visible form. The other images or designs based on it are mere imitation, which may themselves become works of Art, if the imitator is able, through the design or reminder, to recapture the ideal or experience of reality that gave it birth.

This is not an uncommon phenomenon in a racial or national Art,

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[1] Okakura: *Ideals of the East*, Introduction, p. 17.

where life and Art ideals express the main desires of the race collectively Many artists of the age who use the symbol show penetrating insight, and, therefore, we have so many master interpretations and executions of *one common art motif* in India as well in other countries of the Eastern world.

Bearing this explanation in mind, we shall next explain what are *not* the ideals of Indian Art? and later deduce what are.

Art and Reality. Art for the ancient Indians meant something different from what is now-a-days called Art under the 19th Century Western influence. The West under the said influence seems to have held that 'art is only nature to advantage dressed', as Pope once put it ; a crude realism, content with copying what the artist sees around him. Indian Art is in contrast, idealistic, seeking and interpreting the mysteries of natural phenomenon rather than copying its external resemblance. It has, therefore, been criticised as grotesque by critics bred under Western influence, and not deserving the name of Fine Art[1] simply because it does not follow the western convention of naturalism or nature imitation, and uses what they call "unnatural" forms and symbols to express transcendental ideals, which they are not able to interpret.

This irrational criticism is, however, disappearing, owing to the efforts of a few sympathetic and understanding students, who have made themselves at home with the life and ideals of India, and have therefore, been able to appreciate and interpret the spirituality of its Art, and explain its remoteness from the crude copying of nature. Even in the West, the critics and students of true Art have come to realise that the purpose of Art is not mere nature imitation, for, if that were so, photography, or machinery, would be a more successful artist than man.[2] However great the wealth of detail a photograph can give, the rhythm that makes the whole, or the vitality that lurks behind every form, animate or in-animate, because it forms part of a greater whole, and fulfils some hidden and unfathom-

[1] V. A. Smith with reference to the classical art of the VI, VII and VIII centuries. Sir G. Birdwood also denies the existence of Fine Art in India. *Fine Arts in India and Ceylon*, Introduction, p. 2.

Dr. Anderson: *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Prof. Westmacott: *Ibid.*

[2] But the Indian Seer had long ago realised, and taught it to the Indian artist, that all that is visible is not necessarily real. The poet has said: "Things are not always what they seem", and the real artist who can penetrate through the outward, visible, material crust, and see the true inwardness, the essence and meaning of things, need not confine himself rigidly under the trammels of nature-copying.

able purpose can be grasped only by the human mind, and translated by the human hand. This is what makes Art ; and it is just this, that photography by itself cannot give. As this discovery dawned upon the materialistic Art of Europe, its Art forms and expressions changed, and we have the various shades and styles of Impressionism, Cubism and Futurism coming in. The changed tone of the new Art seems to say, that, rather than imitate, we will suggest the beauties of nature, or the ideas behind it. This suggestion or idea is put foremost in their creations, while every other detail is suppressed or subordinated, to give full scope and effect to the main idea. The desire to imitate in detail the beauties of the human form, especially the feminine, seem to be disappearing. Instead, by a few lines and curves, sweeps of colour and shade, its rhythm and energy are suggested. Or, we have a few triangles and squares so arranged as to suggest whatever the artist feels he has to express.[1] At times, colossal proportions and undue heaviness is given to the human form as in Epstein's *Adam and Eve*, which strikes the eyes of those accustomed to the old ideal of nature imitation as hideously unreal ; and who therefore, refuse to recognise such works as works of Art at all. Thus arises the phenomenon, utterly absent in Art that is the collective expression of a whole people, that an artist is not understood by his age. His message is incomprehensible to them, though they are of his age, and he is a product of that same social regime and ideals. Yet his Art language, or symbolism,—if we may mis-use the word—has no meaning for his public, and therefore, no effect on their lives, because they are unable to understand it.

It was for this very reason the Western critics were unable until recently, to understand Indian Art, whose meaning was apparent to the Indians on the surface, unlike Epstein's modern critics. It is because their own Art, inspired by the ideals of the East, has taken on this new method of suggestion and symbolism, which to India was known as early as its earliest Art remains, that some minds in the West have been able to understand Indian thought and idealism, and so grasped the meaning and beauty of Indian Art. Having thus completely disassociated our minds from the Western standards of realism, we will approach the positive side of our discussion on the ideals of Indian Art, and see what realism there means.

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[1] Most often these combinations make no sense and convey nothing to the average observer.

'Reality' in Indian Art.

If India had discarded mere imitation of nature, what was the Indian attitude towards nature? The ideal of Indian Art like that of Indian Life, was to realise the infinite, that is, to go beyond the obvious and material world, or visible nature, to the reality behind. In all Indian Religion and Philosophy, from the Vedic days onwards, Indian thought has been struggling to realise the 'infinite'. The effort of the human mind to grasp the inner meaning of the external facts of nature fill the pages of the *Upanishads*, and sent Gautama Buddha, Mahavira and countless such seekers after truth, from the cities of man into the wilderness of God. And while the search was on, this same ideal or spirit is reflected in Indian Art.

Nature and natural phenomena have not only for India, but for all Eastern thought,[1] a different interpretation. Indian philosophy regards all that we see in nature, the material world, as transitory and illusive, and declares that the only reality is the divine Essence or spirit, behind this illusion or *maya*. To realise and express that reality which is behind all natural phenomena has been the aim of Indian life, to interpret it has always been an ideal of Indian Art. The power, the beauty, the infinite sympathy and magnanimity of that Essence, the people of Aryavarta felt all around them, and so a glimpse, a vision of that reality was the aim of all Art, as it was the search of all Indian philosophy. This is one of the main, guiding, impulses of Indian Art ; an ideal that has ever been ceaselessly persued.

'Unity' in Indian Art.

Another ideal, as assiduously persued by Indian Art, appears to be the essential Unity of all existence, animate and inanimate. It is regarded as a manifestation of the Divine Essence. Nature, man, animals, all appear to form a Trinity, whose main object is to realise God. In his infinite sympathy the Buddha enfolded into his creed, love for all manifestations of the Spirit, however humble. Mahavira taught the same doctrine, and Vaishnavism carried on the same idea under the guise of *Ahimsa*. The *Vedanta* has thought of the Universal Self manifesting itself into various aspects, which must needs be equal and inviolate *inter se*. Hence, the ultimate aim of life and existence is to realise or achieve once again, that Unity. For mankind, that is possible through the attainment of a state of selflessness, that is *Moksha*, or Spiritual freedom, and consequently

[1] Okakura: *Ideals of the East*, p. 1.

the merging of the individual into the Universal Self. This Unity as well as equality of life is another ideal, for which India has striven through the ages, and which her Art has steadily interpreted, right from the days the Blessed One preached his first sermon in the Deer Park at Sarnath. The Art value of this conception of the Unity of the Universe has already been treated, and so it is needless to dwell upon it further here.

Motifs of Indian Arts.

It is these two ideals, so apparent in Indian Art, that make writers characterise it as essentially idealistic, mystic, symbolic and transcendental.[1] The main *motifs* of Indian Art, accordingly, centre round this search for reality, and the realisation of the ultimate unity of existence. Now how did these *motifs* evolve and what forms did they assume in the Art of India? These art *motifs*, though realised or expressed though the experience of one individual of a given society and age, are in reality the result of a collective race consciousness. It is because the people are able to realise their collective entity and experience through these *motifs* that they become really the Art symbols of a whole history, as has been shown. For it is not every creation of an artist's imagination that becomes an art *motif*. It is only the few imaginative creations that answer to the desire of a whole people, who see in them an expression of their racial consciousness and ideals.

This collective race experience, which gives birth to an art *motif*, is not the creation of one mind, but rather, a multiplying of minds working themselves out over a number of generations. In each successive generation, the experience thus at work affects the gifted individual of that generation. It moulds him, forces itself upon his consciousness through its codes of law, and by means of its social institutions, or its system of education.[2] When all these have had their play on an initially gifted mind, such as that of an artist, that mind gives rise to a new idea, or clothes the ideals thus received by him into a new garb. So changed are these ideals in form, so novel the garb, that, as they emerge from this gifted man, the world finds them original, new creations, or works of Art. How much they are dependent on the experience of the ages, however, may be shown perhaps by a few illustrations.

Inventions illustrate this phenomenon particularly well, as well as of course artistic creations. The talent of an Edison is, no doubt, a

[1] Havel: *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 25.
[2] Goldenweiser: *Early Civilisation*, p. 17.

congenital gift. But its exercise and embodiment in the innumerable inventions that bear the name of Edison undoubtedly depend upon a suitable social environment. Had he been born in early pre-historic times, he would have been Edison all the same, but could not have invented the incandescent lamp. Instead, he might have originated one of the early methods of making fire perhaps. Raphael too, had he been brought to light in a Bushman family, would have drawn curiously realistic cattle on the walls of the caves as well as Bushmen or women,[1] but never the soft spiritualised 'Madonna and the Child' he has given humanity. The individual artist or inventor, therefore, is responsible for new ideas, while the society furnishes him with a background or the soil for germinating the idea, and the occasion for giving it shape and expression. The new, then, is verily, "nothing more than a slight ripple on the deep foundation of the old and the established".

The same may be said of *art motifs*. In spite of the fact that they are ultimately the fruits of an individual genius, accurately speaking, they must be regarded as a unique expression of a historic process, whose actual working out we cannot analyse, but whose presence we cannot deny. Let us now consider what may be regarded as such *motifs* from the remains of Indian Art, and show how they are the embodiments of the ideals we have described.

The history of Ancient India may be divided into several periods, based on the religious development of the times. As the remains of Indian Art are mostly religious, and as religion has been its principal motive force supplying the ideals of life and artistic expression, we shall keep to that classification, and try and ascertain the main *motif* of each distinct religious epoch.

The history of India may be divided into the Vedic Age, in which may be included the Epic (1500 B.C. to 600 B.C.); the Buddhist age (600 B. C. to 500 A. D.), when Buddhism was the main religion of India and the fount and inspiration of all Art; and the Brahmanic Age manifesting itself in the various sects of Shaivism, and Vaishnavism (650 A. D. to 1200 A. D.), after which Muslim domination in India begins.

Motif of Vedic Age.

During the Vedic period, the philosophy of Indian Art was being formed. The Aryans of that age worshipped the powers of nature deified. Only a few Seers had begun to suspect the One beyond the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

many, the Truth beyond the Illusion. The *art motif* of the age, if one had emerged, must needs have been either a simple adornment, or thing too vague and indefinite to be treated as the symbol of the age. We have no concrete remains of that period, hence guesses woud be unprofitable. During the Epic and *Upanishad* period, the latter part of the Vedic age, the process was acquiring greater acceleration. Ideals were being given definite shape. The Divine Essence and the eternal Unity were beginning to evolve into the minds of the philosophers who wrote the *Upanishads*. But they had not yet become a racial experience so as to find a collective expression. The two main races of India were as yet hardly blended. Their ideals had to be fused before a common ideal could arise. All this was gradually taking effect.

The first generic embodiment of the fused racial genius in an individual, was the towering personality of Gautama Buddha. In him the peoples of Aryavarta appear to have recognised a synthesis of their experiences. He preached Buddhism; and the ideas and ideals of that faith dominated the people in the age that followed. What particular experience had this age to give us, and did its ideals succeed in achieving a racial expression or art *motif*?

Motif of Buddhist Age.

The outstanding ideal governing life when Buddhism was at its height in India was the doctrine of *Nirvana*, or complete annihilation or ceasing to be. Buddha had found in this the final solution of all the ills which flesh is heir to. Is this Buddha's perception of the Ultimate Reality? For, in a manner it seems the negation of realism. Yet it must not be forgotten that man's striving after this goal has taken various forms. The Buddha accepted the Unity of Existence; but his only solution to the riddle of life was, that life was futile, and suffering inevitable, so long as life continued within the bonds of *Karma*. The only escape was *Nirvana*, and the shortest route to that was through Renunciation and Contemplation, Charity and Service to all living beings.

Time was needed to make this doctrine a part and parcel of the racial experience. Philosophers thought further upon it, and amplified and modified the doctrine. The people followed it to the best of their ability, the monks implicitly. The artists pondered upon it. What attracted them most was the heroic figure of the Master who suffered himself, not only to know the nature of suffering, but to teach the way out of it. Till finally, their various efforts made the teachings one with the life of the people and the ground

was made ready for the emergence of the art motif through the imagination of one individual. The dawning of the Mahayana Buddhism (about 200 B. C.) had removed the prohibition against the portrayal of the person of the Master himself, which, now with the march of the times, was ever growing more dazzling, as successive centuries reflected their own brightness on his personality. Worshipper and artist were filled with the love and devotion, that found expression in the newly found path to salvation, the *Bhakti marga*. Amid this atmosphere of love and tenderness, sincerity and devotion, emerges the *art motif* of the age, perhaps in the same manner that Laxmi emerged from the Cosmic Ocean, and gladdened the eyes of the Gods and Demons alike.

What form did it assume? The form of the Buddha, in the posture of a *yogi*, as he sat meditating under the Pipal tree at Gaya, seeking to be in tune with the Unknown and the Infinite. This posture of the *yogi*, has been associated with this search, ever since Aryan consciousness had found[1] concrete expression in Aryavarta. The *yogi*, then, was a fit symbol of this supreme racial conception, a simple yet eloquent *motif*, that at once appealed to the people of Aryavarta. In their spiritual consciousness that posture had indissolubly woven itself, so that it easily and universally became the outstanding *motif* of the Buddhist age. So enamoured were the people by this expression, and so completely did it embody the ideals of the race, that the Jains, the Brahmins, and all other non-Buddhists also adopted it. It was this *motif*, more than any other, that the pilgrims carried with them to the Far East, China and Japan, where also it was adopted and nationalised, as all the images of the Buddha in China, Japan and Tibet show. So completely was the essence of the religion embodied in it, that, were we, without any previous association, given a statue or a picture based on this *motif* and artistically rendered, and asked to say what it told us about the age to which it belonged, it would take no special flight of the imagination to answer directly, that it was a product of an intensely religious age and Art, that enjoined a life of renunciation and contemplation as typified by such creations.

> "The whole Spirit of the Indian thought is symbolised in the conception of the Buddha sitting on his lotus throne, calm, impassive, his thoughts freed from all worldly passions and desires, and with both mind and body raised above all intellectual and physical strife; yet filled with

[1] This idea was far older than even the Aryan use of it, is suggested by the discovery, among the finds at Mohenjodaro, of a seal on which is engraved a man in Yogic posture under a decorative arch of two nagas blessing him.

PLATE XVIII.

ANURADHAPURAM



BUDDHA IN SAMADHI

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

> more than human power derived from perfect communion with the Source of all Truth, all Knowledge, and all Strength. It is the symbol of the power of the spirit, which comes not by wrestling, nor by intellectual striving, but by the Gift of God, by prayer and meditation, by Yoga, union with the Universal Soul."[1]

Who first invented this *motif*, and where was it first used? We do not yet know, and it is beyond our scope to determine. But, judging from the best remains we have of creations based on this *motif*, at Sarnath, Mathura and Ceylon, we find the idea not only expressive, but very beautifully executed. The association of the Buddha in *Samadhi* with the pose of a *Yogi*, with the eyes that look not without but within, with the beauty and symmetry of an exquisitely rounded form, the figure of a warrior, the expression of a god, filled with infinite understanding and sympathy, the waist of a lion, an attribute of the gods and royalty, all go to show how perfectly every item embodied the racial ideals of the relation between perfect manhood and spirituality.

The Master was, no doubt, represented in many others, besides this pose, such as preaching, standing, walking But, none of these seem in themselves to embody the real essence of the whole philosophical struggle of the age, as embodied in the personal experience of the Buddha represented in the *motif* of the *Yogi* in *Samadhi*. That alone, therefore, may be chosen as the *art motif* of the age. Its popularity we have already referred to. The Jain *Tirthankaras* have assumed this form in their artistic representation, though the artists do not seem to have attained in their execution that height of spirituality and passionless ecstasy which the Buddhist artists at Ceylon, Sarnath, Ajanta and Borobudur especially embody.

Buddhist art ideals, as embodied in this *motif*, are not very different from those already in existence amongst the people before Buddhism originated. Indeed, the Brahmanic ideal must have continued in Aryavarta along side the Buddhist Buddhism, it must be remembered, really originated from the philosophies of the *Upanishads*, and so its basic ideals cannot be materially different. It first began amidst a people steeped in the culture of the Aryans. Hence, given this common race heritage, we cannot expect a radical difference in ideals. Brahmanism, though superceded, was never ousted from the Indian soil, and its social influence was as firm as ever. The symbol of the *Yogi* was essentially an adoption of a Brahmanic life-mode.[2] Hence it would not be wrong to hold, that the

[1] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 32.

[2] Refer to note on page 249.

Brahmanic efforts to realise the ultimate reality, and the true spirituality behind outward forms, must very likely have taken forms not very different from the almost universal *motif* of the Buddhist age. We have unfortunately no Art remains left to substantiate that. But, certainly, in the period that follows the Buddhist supremacy, the Art forms used bear more than a family likeness to 'Buddha in *Samadhi*' of the centuries during which Buddhism dominated the thought and ideals of India. We may suggest that all that the reviving Brahmanic creeds, under the various aspects of Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism, did was rather to transform the dominant Buddhist *motif*, than to supplant it by a wholly new creation. It is this development which we shall now proceed to investigate.

Motif of Brahmanic Revival.

The history of the Brahmanic revival need not detain us here, beyond perhaps a few observations. Shaivism, led by the Brahmin philosophers of the South, was probably the first of the new cults embodying the Brahmin doctrine. Shaktism, the worship of Shiva's consort, the Goddess Kali, was only a variant of the Shaiva faith, with a different emphasis. Vaishnavism was a later development designed, perhaps unconsciously, by its authors to modify the more fierce and aggressive attitude of the southern Shaivism, by the assimilation of the Buddhist doctrine of mercy or *Ahimsa*, love for all living beings. It may be supposed that in it is embodied a conscious effort to reconcile the people of the Buddhist creed by absorbing its main tenets, without offending the reviving faith. Buddha is made one of the *Avatars* of Vishnu, who had taken birth on earth in several forms, to redeem mankind from the snares of evil. In such a form, and with such a predisposition, which the tolerant Emperors did their utmost to foster and encourage, it is no wonder, that there was in India no religious clash like that between the Protestant and the Catholic in Europe, before the advent of the Mahommedans.

Amongst themselves, the several forms of the Brahmanic revival had very little essential difference in their ideals or philosophy. The common ideals and ambitions were emphasised, a little differently by different sects. They all, however, seem to have found a common expression, in this age, in the *motif* of the *Trimurti*. The basis of this has been outlined in the last chapter, but will bear repetition to show the relation of the ideal to the *motif*. Ishwara is the first manifestation of the Universal Spirit or *Brahma*, not unknown even in the earliest Vedic Hymns. *Ishwara*, through the principles of

PLATE XIX.

BOMBAY



THE TRIMURTI AT ELEPHANTA

Purusha and its divine power or *Shakti*, or the female principle, caused matter to live. In matter, or *Prakriti* are the three aspects of creation, preservation and destruction,[1] symbolised by *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, which form the Brahmanic or *Hindu Trimurti*. This ideal was expressed in Art language as a three headed male divinity, representing the three stages in the cosmos, giving the main activities of matter, having each its own presiding deity, respectively, Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer. All three are embodied in the sculptured *Trimurtis*, or rather in the *motif* which seems to us to be the dominant one of that age.

The best representation from the remains we have of this Art *motif* is at Elephanta, a small island in the Bombay harbour. This *motif* is unique in its conception and treatment, and typically Indian in sentiment and execution.

> "The heads of this triple image (at Elephanta) are Supreme rendering of an ethnic type, that is still familiar..... The suggestion of absolute repose veiling a profound inward life is conveyed equally in each of the three masks, though they are representatives of carefully differentiated types of character."[2]

This suggestion of repose veiling a profound inward life was an essential character of the 'Buddha in *Samadhi*' too.

> "The Majestic head of Vishnu, which forms the centre of the Trimurti sculpture, is the Brahmanical counterpart of the head of Bodhisatva in the Ajanta frescoes. The concept of the three aspects of the One—Brahma, Vishnu and Siva represented symbolically from the Shaivite point of view in the famous sculpture of Elephanta, was one of the fundamental cosmological ideals upon which Indian theism both Buddhist and Brahmanical was based. Its psychological development was infinitely older than its first artistic representation, just as the Vedas were compiled ages before they were committed to writing."[3]

This *motif* is also an initiation into the era of thought when the conception of reality, or the Divine Essence, had become transcendental and all embracing, so that man thought it impossible to embody that ideal into his own image, and so attempted to transcend human limitations. The result is the Trimurti, with one body and a triple face. Krishna had said to Arjuna long ago :

> "I am the Soul, Oh, Arjuna, seated in the heart of every human being. I am the Beginning, Middle, and the End of all things, Vishnu among the Gods am I, and among the Lights I am the Sun.

[1] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, Ch. V.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts*, p. 68.
[3] Havel: *History of Aryan Rule in India*, pp. 184-185.

> Time Eternal am I, and the Ordainer with the face turned on every side! Death that seizeth all, and the source of all that is to be, I am the Splendour, of those that are splendid. I am the Victory, I am the Exertion, I am the Goodness of the Good, I am Silence among things that are secret, and the Knowledge of those possessed of knowledge. That, which is the seed of all things, I am that! Supporting this entire Universe with a portion only of my strength I stand."[1]

This ideal, as old as the Epics, appears to be the realisation of the racial mind in this particular age. Its artistic expressions seek to make this all pervading aspect of the Deity live for the people, and suggests it by means of symbols that transcend human limitations.

Following the epoch of the *Trimurti* we have the classical period of Indian Art, under what may be called the complete Brahmanic supremacy. Buddhism had been completely absorbed, and its main *motifs* assimilated. Instead of the omnipresence, and omnipotence of the Divine Essence being embodied in three distinct manifestations, we have all three activities merged in one of the Gods of the *Trimurti.*

Motif of the Classic Age.

Shiva is transformed from the Destroyer to also the Creator, for to destroy in one form is to create in another. Besides these many other activities are embodied in him too. He has come to represent the dynamic force in life, the essential vitality that makes all nature live. His five recognised activities are

> "*Srijhti* (overlooking creation, evolution); *Sthiti* (preservation and support); *Samhara* (destruction, evolution); *Tirobhava* (veiling embodiment, illusion, and also giving rest); *Anurgraha* (release, salvation, grace). These, separately considered are the activities of the deities, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Maheshwara, and Sadasiva."[2]

All these are now focussed into one. This indicates that the people or the racial mind was beginning to perceive the essential unity and rhythm behind all the varied forms of natural creation. Great exhibitions of nature's power such as rain, storm, famine, pests, which at first seemed strange, ugly, destructive and malignant powers, fraught with evil to mankind, now belonged to an essential part of the Divine Order or the Great Rhythm of things. In himself Shiva now represents both creation and destruction, beauty and ugliness, yet transcends all. This experience of this particular age of the Divine Essence is again not new. We have it in the Gita, as an isolated thought of a rishi. But as an experience of a whole race, so as to become part and

[1] Havel: *Bhagavat Gita from Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 58.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 59.

parcel of its thoughts and ideals, and form the subject of the epoch's main art *motif*, that is not old. That old ideal was realised and lived through by the particular age, whose *art motif* it became. When Arjuna begged of Krishna to allow him a glimpse of his Eternal Self, the generous God aquiesed. He armed the hero with a supernatural sight so as not to dazzle him completely. Despite this aid, Arjuna is lost in amazement at the blinding splendour before his eyes. The vision is too much for him ; he begs Krishna to assume his milder and more familiar four armed form, which is not so incomprehensible. The dazed hero uttered in bewilderment, as he gazed at the baffling spectacle.

"God in thy body I see all the Gods,
And all the varied hosts of living beings,
And sovereign Brahma on his Lotus Throne,
And all the rishis and the snakes divine,
I see thee with unnumbered arms and breasts,
And eyes and faces infinite in form,
I see not either source, or mean, or end,
Of Thee, The Universal form and Lord,
Bearing thy diadem thy club and disc.
I see thee glowing as a mass of light,
In every region hard to look upon,
Bright as the blaze of burning fire and Sun,
On every side and vast beyond all bound,
The Undivided Thou, the highest point
Of Human thought, and seat supreme of all,
Eternal laws undying guardian Thou;
The ever, last Cause Thou seem'st to me;
I see not thy beginning mean or end;
Thy strength thy Arms infinite alike.
And unto Thee the Sun and Moon are eyes;
I see Thy face that glows as sacred fire,
And with its radiance heat the Universe;
For all the heaven regions, and the Space,
'Twixt earth and heaven are filled by Thee alone." [1]

Indian Philosophy has always recognised the impossibility of the human mind ever being able to express the fullness of God's glory. The nearest it can approach is the 'four armed form', to use the epic signification. For Krishna clearly says to Arjuna,

"By favour, through my mystic form Divine, Arjuna, thou my form Supreme hast seen, Resplendent, Universal, Infinite, Primeval, seen before by none but thee; yet not by Vedas nor by sacrifice, by study arms, good words, or rites austere can this my form be seen by mortal man. Oh Prince of Kurus ! but by thee alone."[2]

[1] Havel: *Bhagavat Gita from Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 56.

[2] Havel: *Bhagavat Gita*—Oriental series, p. 127 from *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 59.

Yet Art ever attempts to interpret the ideal and the divine, and though never fully succeeding, it gives more to man than he himself is able to fathom. Though not revealing in its fullness the Infinite Resplendent form, it may reveal to us the four-armed form which Arjuna was able to see, and the simpler message and meaning which we are more easily able to comprehend. That is what the art *motif* of this age gives us, its nearest approach to the ideal described above "the undivided thou" that fills the space between the Earth and the Heaven with Himself alone.

The pulsating life, energy and rhythm of this initial force we find embodied in the conception of the *motif* of the "Dancing Shiva" or the *Nataraja* to which the experience of the Divine Reality of this age gives birth.

It is a unique *motif* in its grandeur, solemnity, vitality and in its execution, as the existing examples prove. The best representation of this *motif* is at the Madras Museum, reproduced on the opposite page.

Here, the great God is dancing his Dance of Creation. It is this dance alone that can send waves of life through inert matter. For

> "in the Night of Brahma Nature is inert, and cannot dance till Siva wills it. He rises from His Rapture and dancing sends through inert matter pulsating waves of awakening sound, and lo ! matter also dances, appearing as a glory round about him." [1]

In short his five-fold activities are represented in this main *motif*. His might and power are depicted by the extra arms and hands, given to him, each bearing symbols of his various activities. Yet how beautifully is the figure poised in spite of these additions ! The balance, the grace of movement which is the essence of dance, and the sense of rapture and ecstasy, which is the result of all successful creative efforts, give a marvellous *motif*, a standing reminder to the lofty idealism of the age. Coomaraswamy speaks of the grandeur of this conception and *motif* as the synthesis of Science, Religion and Art.[2]

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[1] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 66.

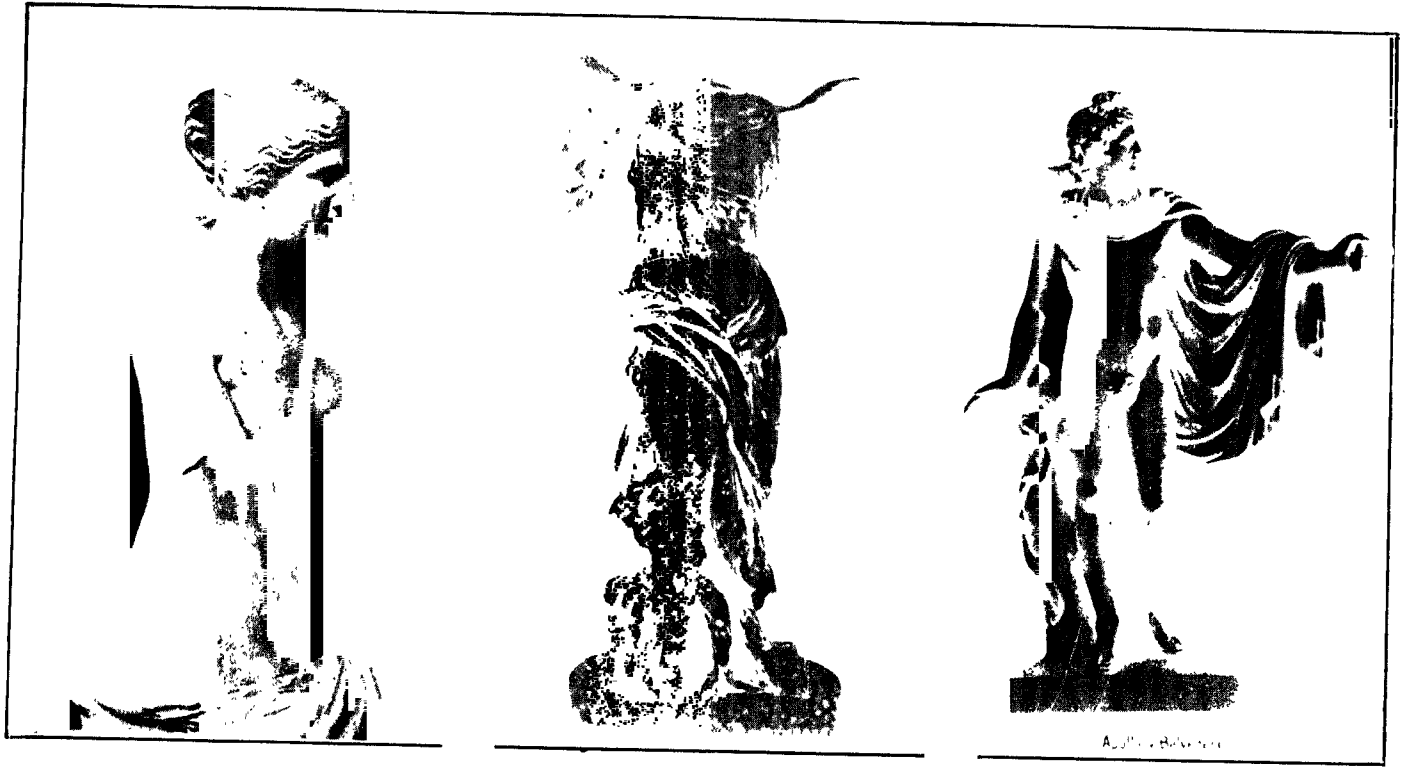
[2] "How amazing the range of thought and sympathy of those rishi artists, who first conceived such a type as this, affording an image of reality, a key to the complex tissue of life, a theory of nature not merely satisfactory to a single clique or race, nor acceptable to the thinkers of one country only, but Universal in its appeal to the philosopher, the lover and the artist of all ages and all countries. How supremely great in power and grace this dancing image must appear to all those who have striven in plastic forms to give expression to their intuition of life..... Every part of such an image as this is directly expressive not of any mere superstition or dogma, but of evident

PLATE XX.

THE NATRAJ



(Madras Museum.)



ILLUSTRATIONS FROM GREEK ART FOR COMPARISON

PLATE XXI.

The *Buddha in samadhi*, the *Trimurti*, and the *Nataraj*, are then, the three main *motifs* of ancient Indian Art, round which that whole Art revolves. In themselves they combine the whole history of Indian Philosophical thought, and give us the main results of how the racial mind visualised, and was affected by the spiritual as well as physical ideals of the times, which may be taken to be the causes of the conception of Indian Art, its birth and development.

Beauty in Indian Art.

Artistic creation to deserve the title, must however, embody, not only the self-expression of the artist, or the common experience of the race taken collectively, but must be at the same time an expression of the Beautiful. We have seen how the self-expression of the artist, and of the race as a whole, was worked out in India. Let us now consider how fared the search for the Beautiful.

Let us take a few celebrated examples still surviving of Indian Art the Chaitya at Karli, or the temples at Mount Abu, or the Great Temple at Bhuvaneshwaram ; or the Buddha in *samadhi*, the Elephanta *Trimurti*, and the *Nataraj* ; or head of the Buddhissatva at Ajanta, or the Apsara in the Pallava Kingdom, to illustrate, in the arts of architecture, sculpture and painting, the Indian conception of the Beautiful, and its actual rendering.

Critics of Indian Art, such as Havel, Coomaraswamy, V. Smith, Fergusson etc., have none of them denied the claim of beauty to these masterpieces. Their opinion ought alone to suffice for the assumption we make, at present, that Indian Art embodied the Beautiful in a high degree. But for further proof we shall, after a few preliminaries, give the evidence of Indian Aesthetic theory itself.

Granting that the Indian examples quoted above have beauty, the question naturally arises : what was the Indian conception of Beauty? This question may best be answered by the use of illustration parallels, and critical comparison and contrast. Let us take a few noted examples of Indian Art, such as those already mentioned, and place besides them, in our mind's eye a group of recognised European works. Such examples are very difficult to secure, because, while the specimens of Indian Art are distinct national art *motifs*, European Art furnishes no corresponding examples, except perhaps the Madonna and the Child *motif*. Let us take Botticelli's Madonna, or Raphael's. Greek Art on the other hand gives us the

facts. It is really an image of that Energy which science postulates behind all phenomena." *Dance of Siva*, p. 65.

sort of illustrations we want. There we find Apollo Belvedere of Praxiteles or Venus de Melos, or the famous Victory from Thrace. For both these sets of Art creations the word beautiful automatically rises to the lips of any critical observer. Yet an intelligent observer cannot help asking, "are these both experiences of the same ideal of Beauty"? It does not seem so. There seems a gulf between the two conceptions. While the Indian ideal seems to fly away with the imagination into regions of sublime thought and realms of spirituality, the other pleases and satisfies our craving for rhythm of lines form and colour, to such an extent that it almost makes us want to caress the loveliness before us.[1]

> "European art" says Havel "has, as it were, its beauty clipped: it knows only the beauty of earthly things. Indian Art soaring into the highest expression, is ever trying to bring down to earth something of the beauty of the things above."[2]

How then does the difference arise in the two species of Art we have called beautiful? For an answer to this question we must go to the Indian aesthetic theory, and try and understand what beauty according to that philosophy is. At the beginning it would be necessary to point out that this is a very difficult subject to treat, because in form of translation, there is no material at all except perhaps two solitary essays by Dr. Coomaraswamy.

Nevertheless, basing ourselves on these and relying on the monuments of Indian Art, we find that the essence of Art in India is *Rasa*. This word is very difficult to translate into English, especially for a person not familiar with Sanskrit. Dr. Coomaraswamy translates *Rasa* as Flavour, which is the equivalent of beauty or aesthetic emotion.[3] Beauty and *Rasa* are accordingly identical. All works of Art must therefore, be *rasavant*, that is contain *rasa*, or embody beauty.

But what is this *rasa*, or beauty, or aesthetic emotion? And how does it arise? It is an experience, the same authority tells us

> "which is pure indivisible self manifested, compounded equally of joy and consciousness, free of admixture with any other perception, the

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[1] But the very unreality of Indian art creations conveys a suggestion of a beauty beyond the grasp of the senses, a loveliness ethereal and perfection of grace and rhythm unearthly yet exquisite which, to those who have the vision to perceive it, even as Arjuna had the Divine vision to perceive the Splendour of the Deity, cannot but seem beyond comparison. While the former is elusive in its idealism, the latter makes the beauty embodied in stone or paint a living and breathing organism.

[2] Havel: *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 24.

[3] *Dance of Siva*, pp. 30-35.

very twin brother of mystic experience and the very life of it is supersensous wonder."[1]

Thus conceived, Religion and Art are different names for one and the same experience, viz. an intuition of Reality and a perception of the identity of the individual with the Universe.

We have already explained the Indian search for Reality, piercing beyond and penetrating through the superficial or apparent, which seems to have enchained the Greek artists! While the Greek theory of beauty, and the Western based thereon, conditioned itself by the obvious realism of material entity, and sought, within the limits set by material realism, to portray the noblest and the most beautiful: the Indian artists—following the teaching of the Seers and Prophets, that directed the spirit of man ever to rise above the limitations of mortal existence and the material Universe,—strove to fuse into their creation, a spark of the divine fire, without which the merely material perfection in conception or execution did not satisfy them. The peculiarity of the artist, in contrast with the Seer and the ordinary man, lies in the fact that "he possesses the power of surely and frequently seizing reality generally behind pure form and the power of expressing his sense of it in pure form always."[2]

Precisely, as love is reality as experienced by the lover, and truth is reality as experienced by the Philosopher, so beauty is reality as experienced by the artist; and these are the three phases of the absolute.[3]

According to the Indian conception, therefore, beauty or *Rasa*, is Truth or Reality as experienced by the artist who penetrates through material form, and embodies his experience in his works or creations. This is beauty as regards the artist. For the spectator or critic, on the other hand, the Beauty in a work of Art is found in the aesthetic emotion engendered in him, by looking upon the concretised form given to an experience of reality or beauty by the artist.

It is only through objective creation that an artist is able to communicate his experience of reality to others. For this purpose, any theme convenient to himself would serve, since the absolute is manifested in all creations. The infusion of *Rasa*, and the calling forth of the corresponding aesthetic emotion in the spectator, does not depend upon the objective nature of the subject selected by the

[1] *Dance of Shiva*, pp. 30-35.
[2] Clive Bell: *Art*, p. 54.
[3] *Dance of Siva*, p. 36.

artist. Delightful or disgusting, exalted or lowly, cruel or kindly, obscure or refined, actual or imaginary, there is no subject that cannot serve to evoke *rasa* in the spectator or artist.

Art, we have said, is a search for Reality. Does this reality exist apart from the artist as an absolute entity by itself? And does the artist discover it? Or, is it personal to him and does not exist apart from him at all, that is, it is not inherent in the cosmic phenomenon?

According to Indian aesthetics, this is a very knotty question to answer, and requires very accurate expression in philosophical language to bring forth its right import. The question, however, is lucidly answered by Dr. Coomaraswamy ; and we shall give it as far as possible in his own words, so that there can be no misapprehension, and we can get the Indian meaning and explanation of this phenomenon as clearly as possible.

Beauty is a relative concept, because we find that what one finds beautiful another does not, and vice versa. To one creator, the scales of a fish suggest beauty, another elects to speak of hovels, and a third is moved by certain landscapes, a fourth by the coils of the telegraph wire. Where then, is beauty, we ask?

> "We have seen that it cannot be said to exist in certain things and not in others. It may then be claimed that beauty exists, everywhere; and this I do not deny, though I prefer the clearer statement that it may be discovered anywhere."[1]

In order to be discovered, beauty must exist apart from the artist, otherwise there would be no need to discover it. Besides, we have said that Beauty is the same as a vision of reality. Reality does exist apart from the artist. All cosmic phenomenon is a manifestation of the Divine Spirit. Hence to search for Reality is to search for the Divine Spirit, which exists apart from the individual. For it is from this Divine Spirit that the individual emerges and to it he returns. During the interval he is a separate entity and therefore apart from the Universal self, which it is the desire of Art and life both to seek union with.

This Universal self or Reality is the same as Beauty, not as concretised in works of Art, or individual glimpses of an artist, but as Absolute Beauty or Reality, of which the artist is able to catch a glimpse. This Absolute Beauty exists apart from the artist, Indian Aesthetic theory tells us.[2] Glimpses of this Absolute Beauty, or Reality, the artist discovers, and embodies in concrete form. This

[1] *Dance of Siva*, 41.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

embodiment in concrete form is beauty as distinguished from Absolute Beauty we have tried to explain.

Absolute Beauty does not exist everywhere in a material and intrinsic form, because if it did, we could persue it with our cameras, and we definitely know and have shown that beauty cannot be persued with cameras. It is thus seen in what sense we are justified in speaking of Absolute Beauty and identifying this beauty with God.

> "We do not imply by this that God (who is without parts) has a lovely form which can be the object of knowledge; but that in so far as we see and feel beauty, we see and are one with Him. That God is the first artist does not mean that he created forms, but that every natural object is an immediate realisation of his being."[1]

This ideal of the artist and Art is not very far from the poet's who held that an artist "reveals God to Man, and Man to God;" though, of course, the Indian aim is not so ambitious as that of the poet quoted. For Indian aesthetics, creative Art is Art that reveals beauty (Reality or God) where we should have otherwise overlooked it, or more clearly than we would have yet perceived it.

This is how the artist is of service to humanity. His true aim is not to extract beauty from nature but to

> "reveal the life within the life, the Noumenon within the phenomenon, the Reality within the unreality, and the Soul within the matter. When that is revealed beauty reveals itself. So nature is beautiful for us if we can realise the Divine Ideal within it."[2]

This ideal or unison the artist reveals to mankind with the aid of a concrete creation, through which he relates his experience; in daily speech spoken of as a work of Art. This creation is a reminder for those who are able to recapture some part of the aesthetic emotions that gave it birth. In recapturing the experience we are filled with the same emotional exultation that the artist was filled with, though not of the same intensity perhaps. Being thus brought face to face with reality, "we momentarily recover the unity of our being released from individuality".[3] In this form Art renders individuals as well as society an invaluable service. To elucidate further this process, Havel gives us a very apt quotation from Mr. L. Binyon, which will form a fit concluding para, to our discussion of 'Indian Aesthetics'. Mr. Binyon is here speaking of Chinese Art, but it applies equally truly to Indian Aesthetics.

[1] *Dance of Siva*, p. 45.
[2] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, p. 24.
[3] *Dance of Siva*, p. 44.

> "In this theory, each work of art is thought of as an incarnation of the genius of rhythm manifesting the living spirit of things, with a clearer beauty and intenser power, than the gross impediments of complex matter allow to be transmitted to our senses in the physical world around us. A picture is conceived of as a sort of apparition from a more real world of essential life. The inner informing spirit, not the outward semblance, is for all painters, of the Asiatic tradition, the object of art, the aim with which they wrestle."[1]

Here then is the Indian view of Art and beauty ably summed up. All that we need say in concluding this section, is that herein also lies the difference between the Indian and Grecian and Western conception of beauty we sat out to explain. The exact shades of difference we have pointed out in their place, so that as a general summing up, the conclusion, that the Western ideal strives after physical and earthly beauty ; Indian and the Eastern after spiritual beauty, will not be amiss.

We have said that what the Eastern as well as Indian artist tries to portray in Art is the "inner informing voice, or spirit". Well, how does one get to hear this inner informing spirit? Or, how is the process of setting aside oneself or personal thoughts, in order to see or hear the inner rhythm of things, affected? This process is, where an artist is concerned, instantaneous. Yet the Indian artist, with the aid of *Yoga* had found a method by which inspiration or the mental image could be obtained, sustained, and definitised. *Yoga* is mental concentration on the object which is desired to be realised. This concentration, when strong enough, accomplishes an identity or unity of purpose with an object, and thus is a glimpse of reality obtained by the artist.[2] Underneath this mysticism of *Yoga* there are scientific and psychological principles fundamental to Oriental idealism. Firstly, there is the setting aside or transformation of the thinking principle. This must be followed by self-identification with the object of work as the second step. This yields the third stage namely vividness of the final image.[3] There are abundant literary parallels for this conception of Art as *Yoga*. Coomaraswamy quotes several examples, the principal being that of *Valmiki* and the *Ramayana* which the saint relived in his imagination by means of yogic concentration before he transcribed it into verse.

Having concentrated on and realised the complete mental image,

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[1] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art*, pp. 42-43.

[2] The shastras give regular directions and instructions for Yoga to be performed by the Yogi artist before commencing his work.

[3] *Dance of Siva*, pp. 22 and 23.

Dance of Siva, pp. 23-24.

the artist's next task is to give it an external form, or translate it into a suitable medium. During this process, the artist uses what are called symbols to express himself. Symbolism is the language through which the ideals of Art are expressed, and hence we have to examine this mode of expressing the ideals of the people. Symbols or conventions were the accepted modes of communication between the artist and the peoples of a race. They were accepted modes of interpretation, and, therefore, easily understood by the public to whom the Art was addressed. For a student who wishes to understand the meaning of a hieratic Art like the Indian, it is necessary first to grasp the meaning and implications of these symbols.

First, there is the symbol of the lotus which is a very important one, and runs through the whole stream of ancient Indian Art. The pillar, the pointed arch, the bases of seats as well as some of the items of the ideal male and female form, such as eyes like the lotus, and cheeks like the lotus, are all derived from the symbolism of the lotus and its plant. An elaborate study of these would for us serve no useful purpose, but any interested reader may refer to Chapter V in *A History of Indo-Aryan Civilisation* by E. B. Havel for further information. Even the *Shikhara* is no more than an adaptation of the four petalled lotus with turned down petals,[1] says he.

Then there are the *mudras* or positions of the hands and of the body, whether standing or sitting, which have their meaning too, and are known as *Asanas*. When intense spiritual force has to be conveyed, only the movement of the hands are allowed, and very seldom those of the lower limbs. The movement of the legs generally indicate various degrees of removal from the state of profound meditation.

The justification of any symbol or convention is : does it, when used, express the idea which the artist wishes to convey, and is the convention used, a recognised form in the understood Art language? If it satisfies these two conditions then the symbol is justified however unnatural it is. Indian symbolism completely fulfils these conditions as both Dr. Coomaraswamy[2] and Mr. Havel[3] clearly show. For, all Indian symbolism had a double meaning. One appeals

[1] Havel: *History of Indo-Aryan Civilisation*, p. 63.
[2] *Dance of Siva*, pp. 67-72.
[3] *Ideals of Indian Art*, Ch. V, especially pp. 72-75.
The above are mostly Buddhist symbols together with the ornamental motifs, the famous "Wheel of Law". With the revival of Brahmanism, we have the symbol of the manifold hands and legs coming in to signify the might and the power of God.

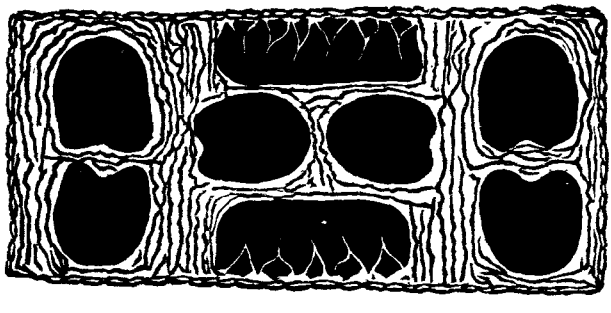
to the popular mind, and the other, more obtruse to the teacher and the philosopher. No symbolism that was not understood could be universally adopted and used as the Indian symbols were. Nor, would an Art based on such symbols endure for millenniums, as the Indian Art has done, and still be a life force in the rejuvenation of the nation, as ancient Indian Art is now doing.

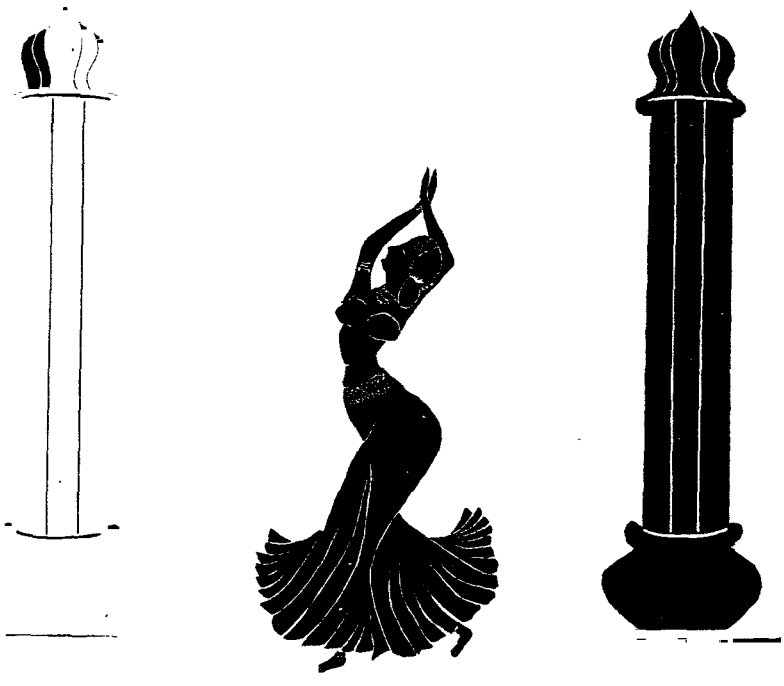
Rothenstein says of Ajanta, but we may equally truly apply this comment to all Indian Art

> "so true is the psychological character of the paintings, so remarkable the delineation of human and animal forms, so profound the spiritual portrayal of Indian life, that they may still serve to-day in the absence of contemporaneous works of the kind, to represent the culture and character, rapidly changing though they now be, of the Indian people."[1]

This concludes our survey of the "conception and ideals of Indian Art", together with the modes in which they were translated. In the following chapter we shall examine each Art separately, and see how these ideals influenced each expression in each separate media. After this, we will describe the place of Art in everyday life.

[1] From *Ajanta* by Lady Harringham, p. 23.





CHAPTER VII

REVIEW OF ARTS IN ANCIENT INDIA

General Review. A peculiarity about Indian Art is that we have never met it in its infancy, i.e. in the stages of its origin and development. The earliest remains we have are of the days of Asoka, which show an Art and technique which is full fledged. The ruins at Mohenjodaro and Harappa clearly show that Art was in existence in India long before its revival under the Mauryas. But we do not yet know definitely how to connect these with the existing Art remains. In many cases even there the Art finds do not show infancy, either. Any statement made therefore, about the origin of Art in India, must be of the nature of a hypothesis, yet to be proved.

Whilst surveying the history of the world generally, we find that the first impetus was given to Art by religion. Most ancient religions arose and grew out of Nature-worship. The powers of Nature supposed to exist behind natural phenomena had to be honoured in order to obtain their favours. The principal means of honouring were sacrifice and ritual, worship and offerings. To these, we may trace the origin of so many of our fine arts.

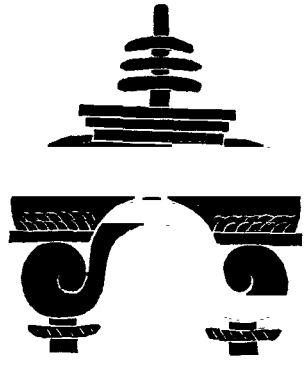
Take the Aryan ritual as known to us. In it we may trace the developments of all the later arts. It is not suggested that Art in Ancient India originated with the Aryans ; for it has been observed that Art existed much earlier than the Aryan conquest. What is really intended is, that Art may have had its origins in ritual—as it did amongst other ancient peoples—with the Aryans perhaps ; but what the origin of the pre-Aryan Art is it is impossible to solve. The Vedic religion was mostly nature worship ; but as society became more stable, its ritual became more and more elaborate, till, in the *Yajur Veda* the forms and ceremonies, incantations and observances, were definitised. Certain sacrifices had to be performed so many times a day. Each particular deity had to be invoked at a particular time and month of the year. The household gods and ancestors were to be daily worshipped with flowers and offerings For each particular worship there was a especial ritual. Rhythm must have been indispensable even in the earliest times as the very genius of the Vedic language was musical, and the recitation of the Vedic *Mantras*, — Incantations — required to accompany the sacrifices must have been chanted. That, in course of time may have given rise to the Art of Music, vocal at first and later instrumental. For each especial sacrifice, again, certain requirements, e. g. altar, fire, lamps, rice, vessels to carry offerings in, were essential. The necessity and desire to protect the altar and fire from the inclemencies of the weather may have very probably given rise to architecture, and for the decoration and adornment of this architecture may have evolved the art of sculpture in relief. Similarly, painting and other kindred Arts may have slowly entered into the fold of religion, to make its rituals and ceremonies more elaborate and finished.

At certain seasons of the year, particular sacrifices had to be accompanied by dialogues between the sacrificial priests, representing those between the Gods and the demons in their celestial abode. These were very often accompanied by their due gestures, and thus, the seeds of dancing and drama were sown, within the aegis of religion. Hence the origin and developments of all arts may be traced to the ancient ritual, as far as the Aryans were concerned.

With the development of Philosophy, Metaphysics and Ethics, we have an attempt to disassociate Art from Religion, or at any rate, to give it a more secular aspect. This attitude was strengthened by the growth of Jainism and Buddhism, which at first despised all Art forms, as so many snares of worldliness. This was a perilous

period for Art in India. But Mahayana Buddhism and Brahmanism which never lost its hold upon the daily life of the people, came to its rescue, and restored Art to its proper position in the social scheme.

SECTION I. Architecture.



Architecture is said to be the synthesis of all Art, and so it will be treated first in this survey.

The earliest remains of Indian architecture, apart from the discoveries at Harappa and Mohenjodaro, are Buddhist. They are in a fully developed style, which leads to the conclusion that, even before these remains, there must have been architecture of equal merit and in similar style. But perhaps the yet earlier Indian architecture was in wood or other perishable material, which has left no remains. Of that pre-Asokan architecture, the only existing remains are the wall of Rajgriha.

How much about architecture as a Fine Art the Aryans really knew, we cannot definitely say. Coomaraswamy[1] says that it is clear architecture had not made much progress with the Aryans when they first entered India. The reason given is that the later styles have been shown to be the developments from aboriginal and non-Aryan structures, such as post, beam, bamboo, and thatch.

On the other hand, we know that the Aryans during their journeys towards Aryavarta, passed through civilisations of no mean value, where architecture was highly developed. They must have, therefore, acquired something more than the mere rudiments of the Art from their contact with the Babylonian and Sumerian civilisations. Hence, to allow them only a very meagre knowledge of architecture, does not seem a very accurate reading of available material. That however, the Dravidians or the Dasyus knew far more about architecture than the Aryans, is evident both from the references in the *Vedas* and the epics, but more positively from the ruins of Mohenjodaro and Harappa. In the Epics it is especially mentioned that the Dravids lived in towns,[2] had forts to defend

[1] *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, pp. 9-107.
[2] Cp. Ante. pp. 42-48.

themselves, and therefore were on the whole more advanced than the Aryans, who were still at the tribal stage, and lived perhaps in villages.

We have references, in later literature, to the existence of other architecture besides the Buddhist during and before 550 A. D., but, actual remains anterior to 550 A. D. of this non-Buddhist architecture we have none. In the Epics we are told of secular architecture such as *subhas* or assembly halls[1] and palaces. One such was made for the Pandavas,[2] on the model of the architecture near the Manaka Hill, north of the Kailasa.[3] Of the historic palace of the Mauryas at Pataliputra, we have a glowing account from Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador, who compares it to those of Susa and Persepolis.[4]

Town-planning must have been known also, for we have various references to the splendour of the ancient towns. In the *Ramayana* we have descriptions of Ayodhya, Kishkindha, Lanka, which bespeak an advanced knowledge of the layout of big cities. Ujjaini, Bana compares with Mount Kailasa, and Kalidasa, in his *Meghaduta* is not one whit less complimentary to this famous city. Indeed! it appears very well to have deserved this praise from some of the descriptions cited. Bana, describing the light-hearted folks there says that they order making of water works, bridges, temples, pleasure grounds, wells, hostels, cattle sheds, halls of assembly. They are masters of the whole circle of arts, and the city is like a magic tree that grants all wishes.[5]

Besides town-planning, the constructing of reservoirs, baths, all seems to have been known and practised in ancient India of the pre-Buddhist age, even as the *Shilpa Shastras* bear witness.

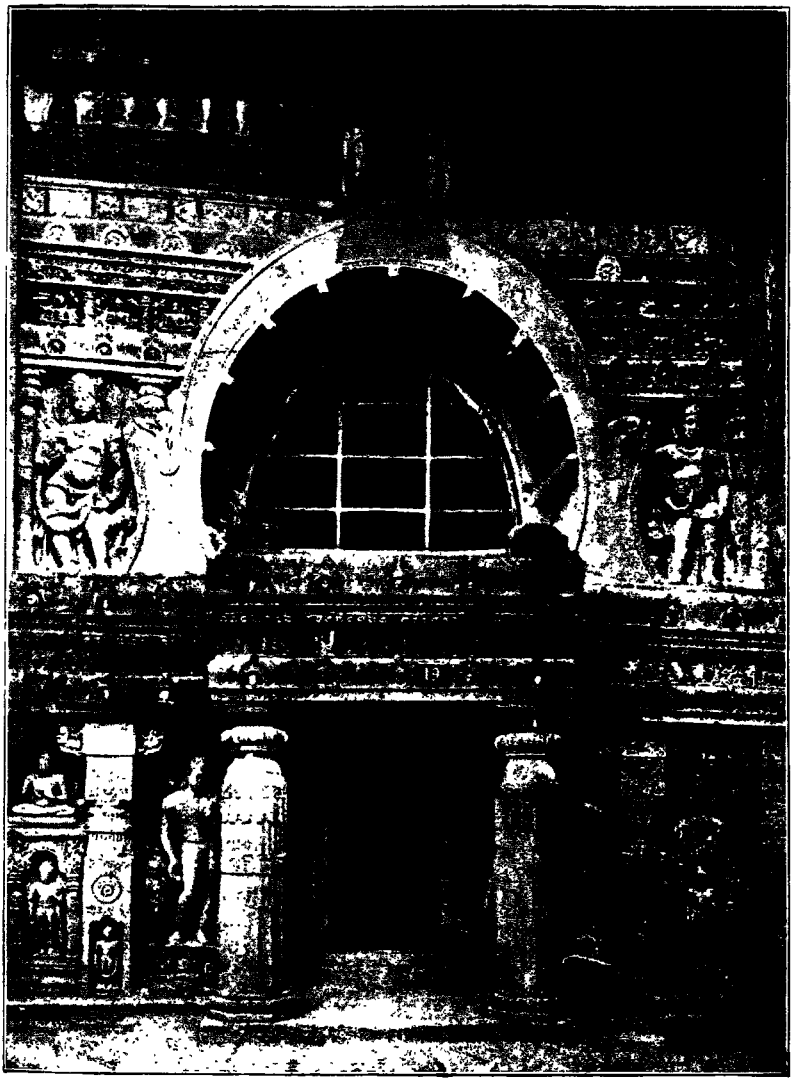
In spite of this, however, the earliest architecture of which we have adundant remains is Buddhist, commencing from the days of Asoka, mainly because, his craftsmen, and architects employed permanent materials. The style and features of the Buddhist architecture suggest close affinity to the ancient or epic times, as the descriptions extant indicate, and as supported by the *Shilpa Shastras*. The forms of architecture mostly favoured by the Buddhist, and of which the remains still survive, are the *Stupa*, the *Chaitya*, and the

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[1] Gangooli: *Indian Architecture*, p. 4.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Rothenstein: *Ancient India*; V. Smith: *Fine Arts of India and Ceylon*, p. 1.
[5] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 105.

PLATE XXII.

AJANTA



Entrance to Cave No. 19.

A typical entrance to a chaitya-hall. The bay-window resembling a peepul leaf is about the only opening that supplied the light to these halls.

PLATE XXIII.

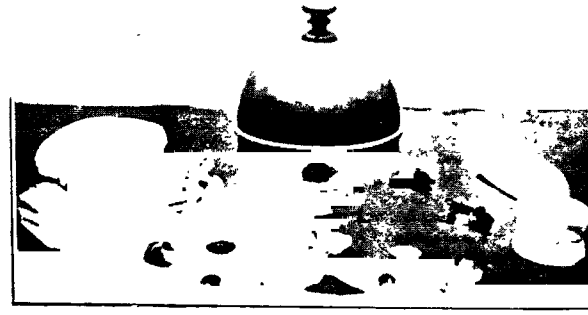
THE SANCHI MONASTERY

(a) The site, with "the Great Stupa" in the back ground.





(b) The representation of a Stupa at Nagarjunikonda.



(c) Buddha's relics from a Stupa.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

Vihara. These are, of course, all forms of religious architecture, the secular forms being lost by the ravages of time, or the neglect or hostility of man.

The Stupa. The *Stupa*, though it did not originate with, was nevertheless used mainly by the Jains and the Buddhists. By the latter it was used as a relic shrine, funeral mound, or, to commemorate certain sacred spots, such as the deer park where the Blessed One first set the Wheel of Law in motion; or Buddha Gaya, the place where Prince Siddhartha became the 'enlightened one'. Their size varies from miniature votive models, to the largest at Anuradhapura in Ceylon.

The earliest known example of a *Stupa* is at Piprawa,[1] on the Nepalese frontier. The next in date and authentic, is the Great *Stupa* at Sanchi, first constructed in the days of Asoka, 3rd Century B C., and at present about the best as far as preservation is concerned. Next to the last named comes that of Bharhut, and still later the Amaravati and Sarnath *Stupas*. All the above are illustrations of the structural *stupa*. Besides these, there were also the miniature votive models, such as those at Karli, Ajanta, Ellora and Kenherri.

All *Stupas* have a uniform structure based on the following plan. First there is a solid dome shaped monument of brick, mud or stone, raised on a high platform, and surrounded by a railing or *prakara* which was originally of wood, copied later in stone, by some called the Buddhist railing. Its purpose was to protect the central portion against evil spirits. The rails are three in number, consisting of posts or *stambha*, pierced with cross-bars or *suchi*, and mounted by copings or *usvisa*. These represent the Triple Refuge of the Buddha, the *Dharma* and *Sangha*. In the Sanchi *Stupa* these railing are plain, but later on, in the monuments at Bharhut and Amaravati, there is ornamentation in relief on the rails.

At each cardinal point of the larger stupas, are gates—at Sanchi huge ones—reminiscent of their wooden origin. On these gates and their arches, called *Toranas*, were showered all the love and worship of the devotee in the form of exquisitely executed sculpture. The best examples of these *Toranas* are the ones attached to the Great *Stupa* at Sanchi. Marshall speaks of them as the most perfect and most beautiful of all the monuments of the early School.[2] These *Toranas* are of very great importance to the

[1] V. Smith: *History of Fine Arts of India and Ceylon*, p. 17.
[2] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 627.

development of architecture. They are the fore-runners of the arch, even as the *Stupas* are of the Dome. They were square themselves as will be seen from the illustration ; but, from these the idea of the curved arch may have easily originated. The semi-circular mound, or the bulbous semi-circle of the *stupa* proper, suggests kinship of a very marked degree to our later dome ; and very probably, the dome may have developed from the relic mound.

Origin. The *Stupa*, we have said, did not originate with the Buddhist. What, then, was its origin? And how came it to be associated with the Buddhist and Jain faiths? The word *Stupa* means something raised,[1] or a mound. The purpose of a mound generally was to bury a person, relic or treasure. There are two theories as to the origin of the *Stupa* ; one gives the *Stupa* an Aryan origin, and the other a Dravid or an aboriginal one. Havel tells us that a *Stupa* greatly resembles huts in Mesopotamia, where the first Aryan branch had migrated. This style is also found in Aryavarta, and hence, putting the two together, he assumes that the Indian *Stupa*, was an Aryan form of funeral mound, given only to the Kings or their tribal leaders. This especial funeral honour was conferred on the Buddha too. He was given a royal funeral. This Buddhist *Stupa*, then, says Havel, is the direct descendant of the Aryan *Chandra Cult* of which it formed a symbol.[2] The other theory about the origin of the *Stupa* is that it is purely Indian, and because of the resemblance it bears to the existent Toda huts, may have descended from the same source, i.e. aboriginal. Perhaps it was a sepulchral mound built in this form.

Chaityas. Whatever be its origin, round the miniature votive *Stupa* were sometimes built worship-halls, called the *Chaitya* halls, which V. Smith and Havel call purely Buddhist structures. These were halls built round a *Chaitya* which has the same meaning as *Stupa*.

Gangooly says :—

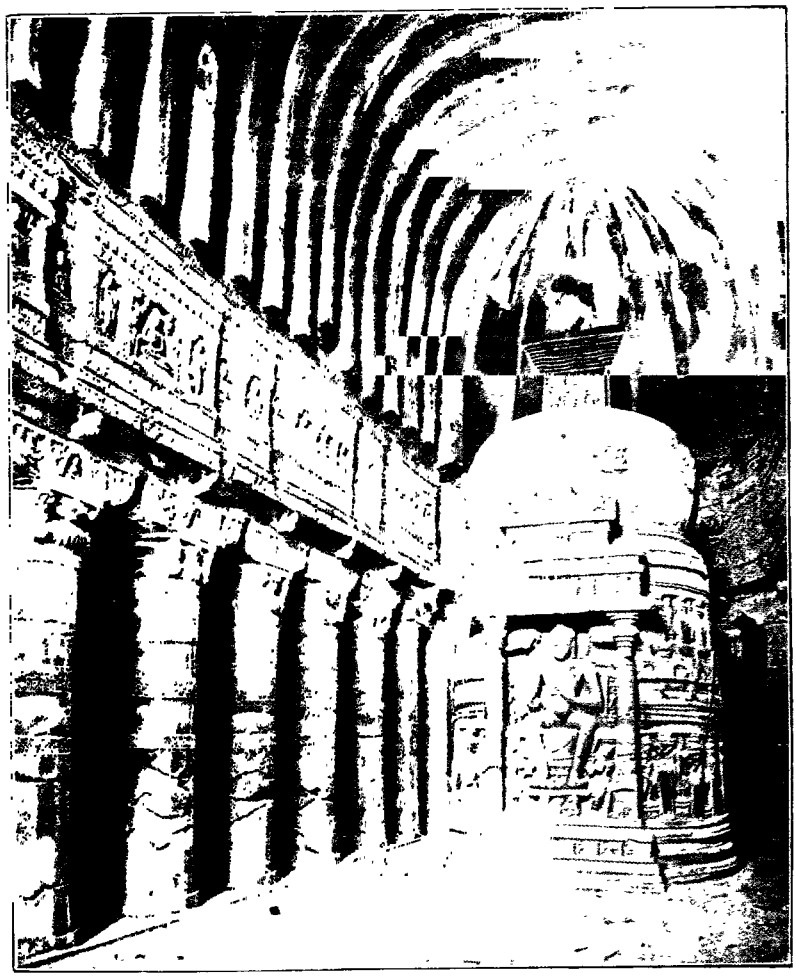
> "The earliest surviving architectural relics are the so-called Chaityas of the Buddhist period. They are not in any sense especially Buddhist, but were adapted by Buddhists from earlier, perhaps Vedic architectural models. According to its root meaning, Chaitya (from Chita a funeral pyre) denotes anything connected with a funeral pile, e.g. the tumulus

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[1] Gangooli: *Indian Architecture*, p. 6.
[2] *Ibid.*

PLATE XXIV.

AJANTA CAVE No. 26



A CHAITYA WITH A VOTIVE STUPA

(By courtesy of the Archaeological Department of Hyderabad.)

> raised over the ashes or relics of a dead person. Hence, technically a Chaitya is a stupa (something raised) or a mound..... In Buddhist Art, it is a mound containing a relic e.g. ashes, bones, hair or tooth of the Buddha. Chaitya is a religious term while 'Stupa' is an architectural equivalent for a relic mound."[1]

The word *Chaitya* has another meaning too, i.e. the mind, and hence a *Chaitya* hall may have meant a place of meditation built round a relic shrine. Thus *Chaitya* halls are halls built round *Chaityas* or what we have called miniature votive models. These halls were either excavated from solid rock, or constructed. Of the former type are the worship halls of Lena, Karli, Ajanta and the oldest Lomas Rishi Cave near Gaya at Barabar. Of the structural type we have hardly any remains.

> "They were most probably made of wood, and have not survived except in pictured replicas on carved reliefs, as at Bharhut and Amaravati."[2]

The construction of these halls is very much like the ancient Christian basilicas, which were the fore-runners of the modern churches. At the entrance of these halls was a peculiar facade, consisting of a window, arched in form resembling a peepal leaf, from which very probably it originated. This window must have served to admit light and air, as well as formed an ornamental device. Under it was the entrance, at times in the form of a door, and at times indicated by two huge pillars. Before the entrance was sometimes a porch. As one entered the hall, there was the nave with side aisles; then came the apse, where the *Stupa* generally was. Half way up the column, supporting the barrel roof, there was a gallery on either side, and that completed the *Chaitya* hall. The nave was sometimes marked off by a line of pillars, and the roof was barrel shaped and ribbed, exactly like wood work accurately copied in stone. These ribbed roofs, and the *Chaitya* window, or 'bow' or horse-shoe window, give us the beginning of the pointed arch that later developed. The earliest of these *Chaityas* date from the days of Asoka.

Pillars of the Chaityas.

Another integral part of a *Chaitya* that deserves special attention, are the pillars or *Stambhas*. These pillars were used both to mark off the nave, and to support the porch outside. At Bedda, Lena and Karli "we come across very interesting developments of the Stambha, the characteristic Indian pillar".

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[1] Gangooly: *Indian Acrhitecture*, p. 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

A typical Indian pillar is described thus. It is firstly derived from earlier wooden models, which had a shaft; and under the shaft an earthen water-pot with water so as to prevent the insects getting at the wood.[1] This was mounted by a capital of an upturned lotus. This wooden pillar has been rendered often very accurately in stone at these caves. The shaft is stuck into a *kalasha*, surmounted by a capital, or abacus of upturned lotus, over which on a little cornice are effigies of bulls, horses, and lions, sometimes mounted by human couples as at Karli In the earliest halls at Bhaja and Bedda, the pillars are without capitals. Capitals appear for the first time on the verandah of Lena[2] (1st Century B. C.). At Karli, Ajanta, and Badami, the capital become very ornate. intricately carved and fashioned with fluted cushions, and the jar and foliage *motif* (Ajanta). The best examples of existent *Chaitya* hall, with the most elaborately carved pillars and capitals, are at Ajanta and Karli (Cave XIX 6th Century). Here, i.e. at Ajanta another notable addition is the figure of the Buddha mounted on the *Stupa*, or rather carved into the *Stupa*.

These *Chaityas* are imposing constructions, to which awe and solemnity are added by the high barrel-shaped roofs. Their size varies, but the structure is very proportionate. Ornamentation is lavishly used on the brackets, columns, capitals, cornices and friezes of the *Stupa* itself, and everywhere else where it is possible to apply ornamentation. At Ajanta, paint adds to the decoration, sometimes painting and sculpture are combined. In all the other *Chaityas*, sculpture abounds.

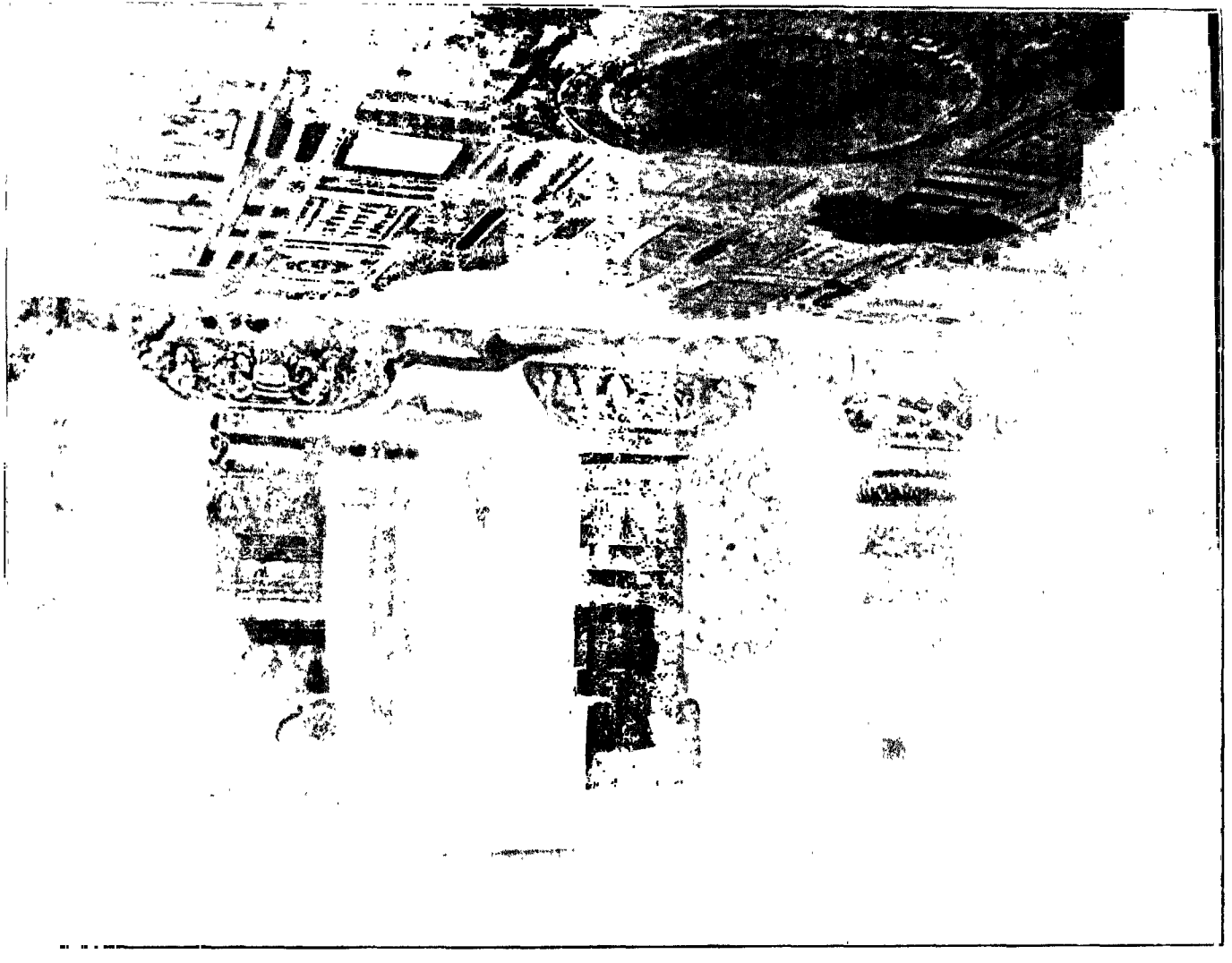
It may strike us as strange that Indians, when they knew the art of building, and could construct marvellous palaces, still insisted on having these excavated shrines. The reason is partly climatic and partly religious. The rock-dwellings were much cooler, and well-sheltered from the glare of the scorching sun.

> "In India excavated worship halls represent a refinement of luxury for the user, an exceptional trial of skill for the craftsman, and a special act of devotion on the part of the individual or community for which the work was performed,"[3]

and therefore their popularity. The same spirit of *Bhakti* or the feeling that God demands the best man could offer Him, always prevalent in Indian Art, we meet here too.

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[1] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, Section on Architecture.
[2] Gangooly: *Indian Architecture*, p. 11.
[3] Havel: *A Study of Indo-Aryan Civilisation*, pp. 69-70.



A VIHARA WITH ITS WALLS, PILLARS AND CEILING PAINTED (*Courtesy Archaeological Department of Hyderabad.*)

PLATE XXVI.



A panel from Sanchi showing the front and side of a house with its balconies

Vihara. The Monastery, or the *Vihara*, of which this *Chaitya* hall was very often a branch, as at Lena, Karli, Ajanta—was the centre of the Buddhist monk's life. These Monasteries, again, were of two types ; excavated and constructed. The examples of the structural type were those at Sanchi, Taxila, Nalanda, Sarnath, and Anuradhapura in Ceylon. Many of them combined in themselves both Universities as well as Monasteries, such as Taxila, Nalanda and Ajanta. We have already quoted the famous pilgrim, Hiuen Tsang, as to the beauty of the architecture of these splendid edifices. Another description of a monastery by Yuan Chwang in the South is one worth quoting here to show the magnificence of their residential architecture.[1]

> "It has five stories in all; the lower being in form of an elephant with five hundred stone chambers. The second is in form of a lion with four hundred chambers; the third is in form of a horse with three hundred chambers; the fourth is in form of an ox with two hundred chambers; and the fifth in the form of a dove with one hundred chambers."

The plan of these *Viharas* or Monasteries, Havel tells us, was the same as that of an Aryan joint family house, and consisted of a big hall in the centre, generally square, with a verandah in front and cells at the side, for the monks to live in. Sometimes there was a shrine at the end of the hall, as at Ajanta. This hall was different from the *Chaitya* hall, for it was not a hall of worship, but was merely an assembly-hall, where the monks got together, either for their meals or council. Contrasted with the *Chaitya*, these were simpler, less ornate, and more commonly used. These Monasteries appear from the description given, and from others of Hiuen Tsang, of Nalanda and Taxila, to suggest that no effort was spared by the patrons and inhabitants to make the places as luxurious as possible. One extant *Vihara* at Ajanta (Cave No. II) is very impressive, even at present, with almost all its decoration in ruins. How marvellous must have been the original! with stately columns, and walls and ceilings covered with frescoes of the vividest hue, in which men and women of marked beauty went about the duties of their daily life, and princes and lords portrayed with all the wealth of their retinues, lend a charm indescribable to these archaic dwellings.

One more form of Asokan architecture, which later on became a common feature of Indian architecture is the *lat* or pillar of Asoka, consisting of a tall and slightly tapering monolithic shaft, with various bases, and surmounted by animal capitals. The origin of

[1] Das: *Educational System of Ancient Hindus*, p. 342.

these pillars is traced by Fergusson[1] and Marshall[2] to Persepolis and Susa. Havel[3] gives them a purely Indian origin, though perhaps the craftsmen who fashioned them were foreign, probably from Persia or Bactria.

Secular Architecture.

Of secular architecture during this period, we have no concrete remains. From descriptions perhaps and instructions in the *Shilpa Shastras* as well as from the replicas at the reliefs of Bharhut and Sanchi, we get an indication as to the forms of these ordinary houses.[4] A plan constructed from these is given by Dr. Coomaraswamy. The ground floor, according to him,[5]

> "is very probably used for shops, or cattle; a second storey was supported on pillars. A narrow verandah runs along the second storey projected by a Buddhist railing. While the rooms behind have a barrel roof and Chaitya windows, exactly resembling those of the caves. Balconies are a conspicuous feature of Indian architecture from the first to last."

To us, who live in a City where we are used to seeing, the dandi, the bullock-cart and the aeroplane side by side, these houses do not seem strange at all. Houses, similar to those shown in the illustrations, are often visible in the streets of this very modern city, Bombay, bearing testimony as to how much of the past is still with us.

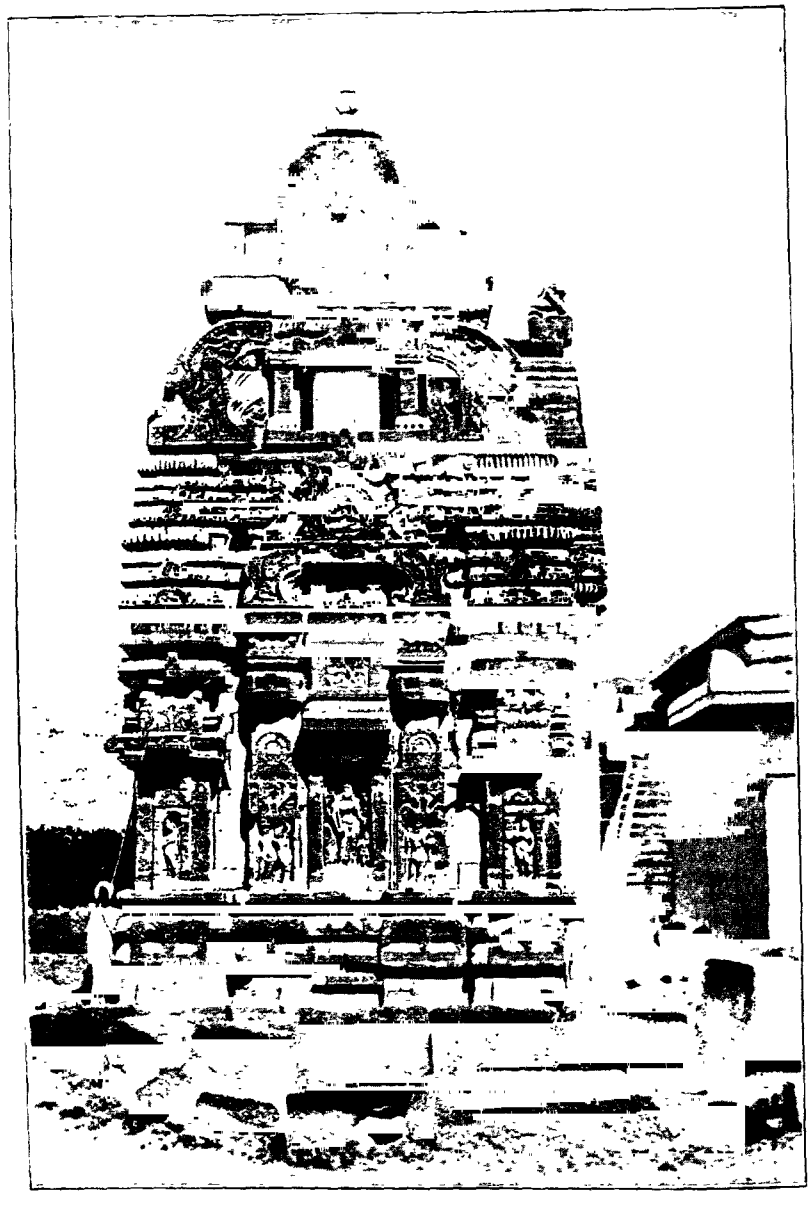
Besides housing, the other forms of secular architecture of which we have evidence, are reservoirs and irrigation works, such as dams, canals. and lakes. All these were known in ancient India as early as 2000 B. C. says Coomaraswamy.[6] A few historical instances are the Sagar Digi at Gaur in Bengal. In Ceylon, the earliest tanks date from the 4th Century B.C.[7] The largest of these measures 9 miles in length, and the area of the greatest exceeds 6000 acres. More surprising than even this large expanse, is the amount of engineering skill displayed, especially in the building of the sluices,[8] of which the valve-pits are the chef-d'œuvre testifying to the perfect knowledge of the constructors regarding the pressure

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[1] *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Havel: *Handbook of Indian Art*—Asokan Pillars.
[4] Sanchi Pillar, p.
[5] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, pp. 114-115.
[6] V. Smith: *Fine Arts of India and Ceylon*, p. 115.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 116.
[8] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts*, p. 116.

PLATE XXVII.

BHUVANESHWARA



(From Codrington's Ancient India.)

RAJARANI TEMPLE

and action of water under the given circumstances. Bathing pools attached to temples, or built for public use in cities, "were designed with a sense of fine proportion and a wonderful elegance of detail".

BRAHMANIC ARCHITECTURE. This is about all that is known of architecture in ancient India up to 550 A. D. With the two exceptions of Hindu temples which we will mention presently, it is all Buddhist.

Of Brahmanic religious architecture we have almost no trace till 550 A. D. with two exceptions referred to above. After that date, both Jain and Brahmanic temples crop up almost in every nook and corner of India as if by the touch of a magic wand, incomplete form, and show a very highly developed technique. V. Smith[1] tells us of the existence of an old Shaivite temple in Bawali district, Agra Provinces, dating back almost to the 1st A. D. or B. C. but about which nothing more is known. Similar information is also available about the Bithargaon temple dated 4th Century A. D.[2]

The Temple. During and since the 6th Century A. D., we have a superabundance of Hindu monuments, in spite of the unsparing destruction at the hands of the merciless Muslim raiders from the North.

The main features of a Brahmanic temple may be divided into two. There is first the Nave or the porch, with or without pillars, open to the two upper strata of society. Next to that comes a Shrine which is square, and in which resides the image or *lingam*, or whatever else that is worshipped by that sect. In this part of the temple, none may enter save the officiating priest, except when there is a passage for circumambulation for the pilgrims. The nave has a flat roof, while the shrine is covered by a spire or *Shikhara*.[3] The whole is surrounded by a wall with four entrances. The gates or *gopurams* were very elaborately fashioned, and were looked upon as one of the essential parts of a temple. Outside the portions occupied by the nave and the shrine were sometimes built large halls or *Mandapams*.

These temples were built not for men but for Gods.[4] Hence, all that labour and love, *Bhakti* and wealth, could do was done to make these abodes of the Gods as beautiful as possible. Each

[1] V. Smith: *Fine Arts of India and Ceylon*, p. 22.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[3] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts*, p. 119. Details of plan adopted.
[4] *Ibid.*

temple is dedicated to some God, and to it flock pilgrims from all over India, for *darshan*, to see the Gods. There are temple cities too, mostly Jain, such as Palitana and Girnar, built for Gods alone, inhabited by none save priests, and visited by pilgrims and priests mostly.

These temples may be grouped, according to their structural styles, into two main groups, the first is Aryavarta style found mostly in Aryavarta, and the second the Dravidian, in South India and Ceylon.

Aryavarta Style. In the first style are several well-known shrines, e.g. the Bhuvaneshwara group of temples dating from 9th to 13th Centuries. Of this group the two famous temples are the Great Temple and Rajarani.

Slightly different in style and yet magnificent, is the temple at Konarak, named the *Surya* temple, or the temple of the Sun, dating 1240-80. The third group under the Northern style is the Khajuraho group, of which the temple of Vishvanath is the chief.

The Bengal style is, again, an adaptation of the Northern style. But the most picturesque and ornate expression of the Northern style of architecture is in Gujarat, which may be termed the Jain style. The Dilwara temples at Mount Abu, with their exquisitely intricate carving in marble, are a standing testimony to the perfection that style had reached. The famous temple at Somnath, which fell a prey to the fanatical zeal of the Muhammadans, was of the same character. Temples in similar style of later date are scattered in Rajputana.[1] From the illustration opposite, one can visualise for oneself the effect of these marvellous structures. Their architecture is not very extraordinary. The ornamentation though gorgeous, is not so baffling as that in the best Southern style.

The chief features of the Aryavarta style are the bulging spired *Shikhara*, with carved ribs, rising above the shrine, and often repeated upon itself as an architectural ornament.[2]

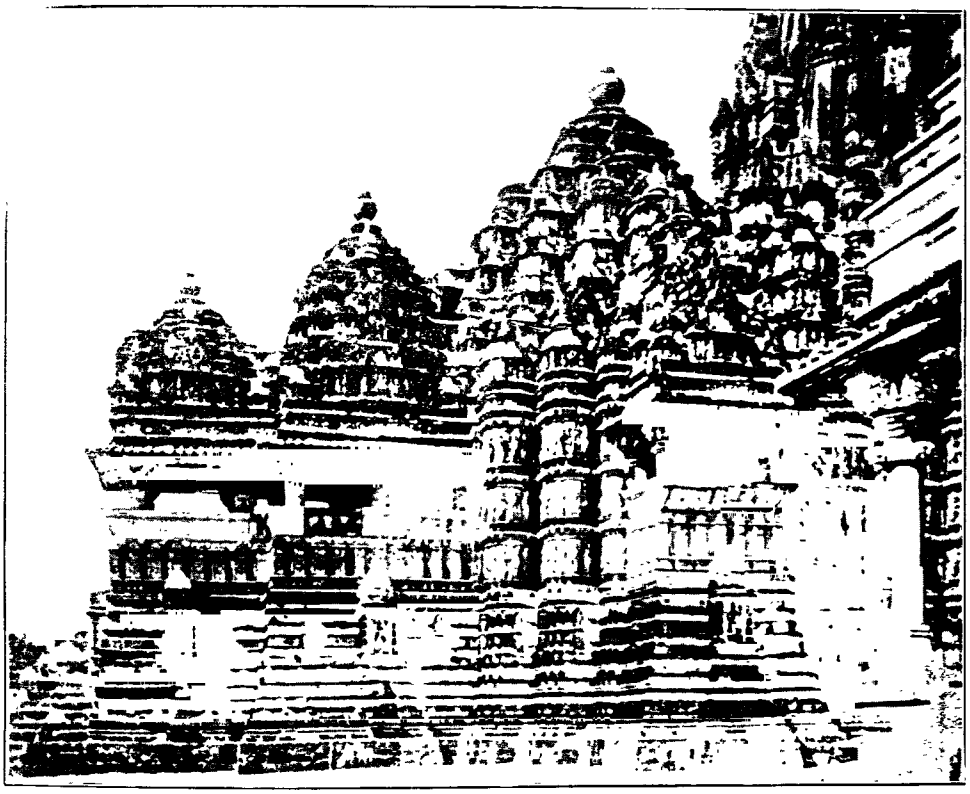
The Dravidian Style. The Dravidian temples differ from the Aryan, by their barrelled roofs or globular domes.[3] Besides these they have great towers horizontally divided into terraces. The roof can be traced back to the Buddhist *Chaitya*.

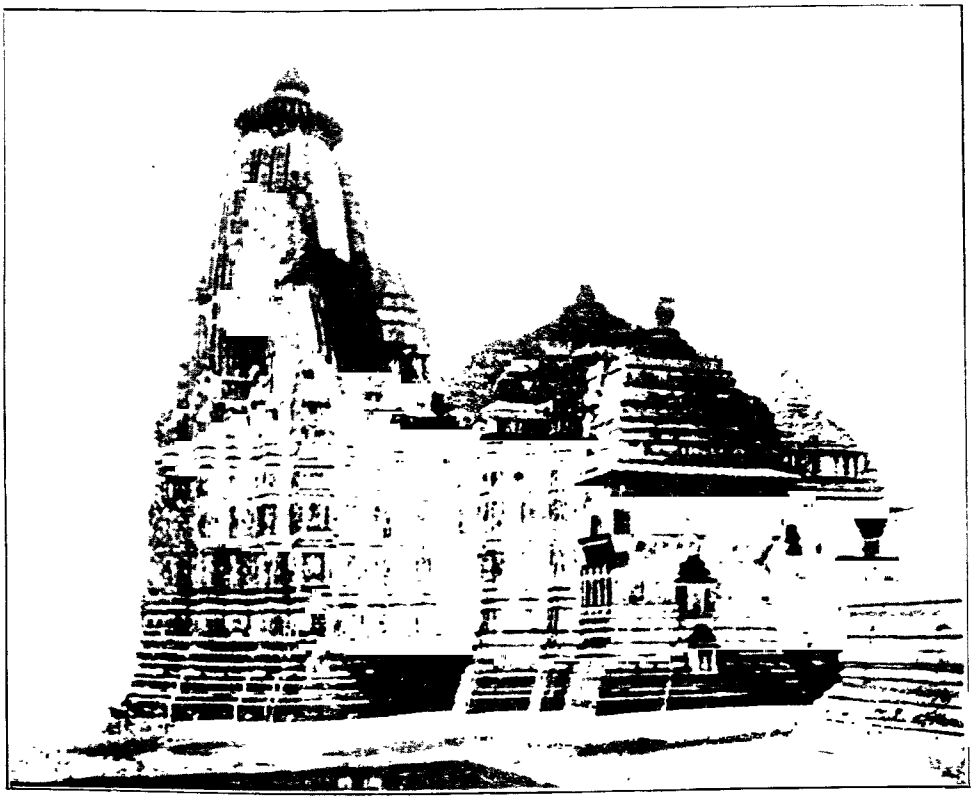
> "The Central shrine except in the earliest examples, is invariably surrounded by an immense walled quadrangle, usually including numer-

[1] Refer to page and illustration, pp.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 121.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

PLATE XXVIII.

KHAJURAHO TEMPLES

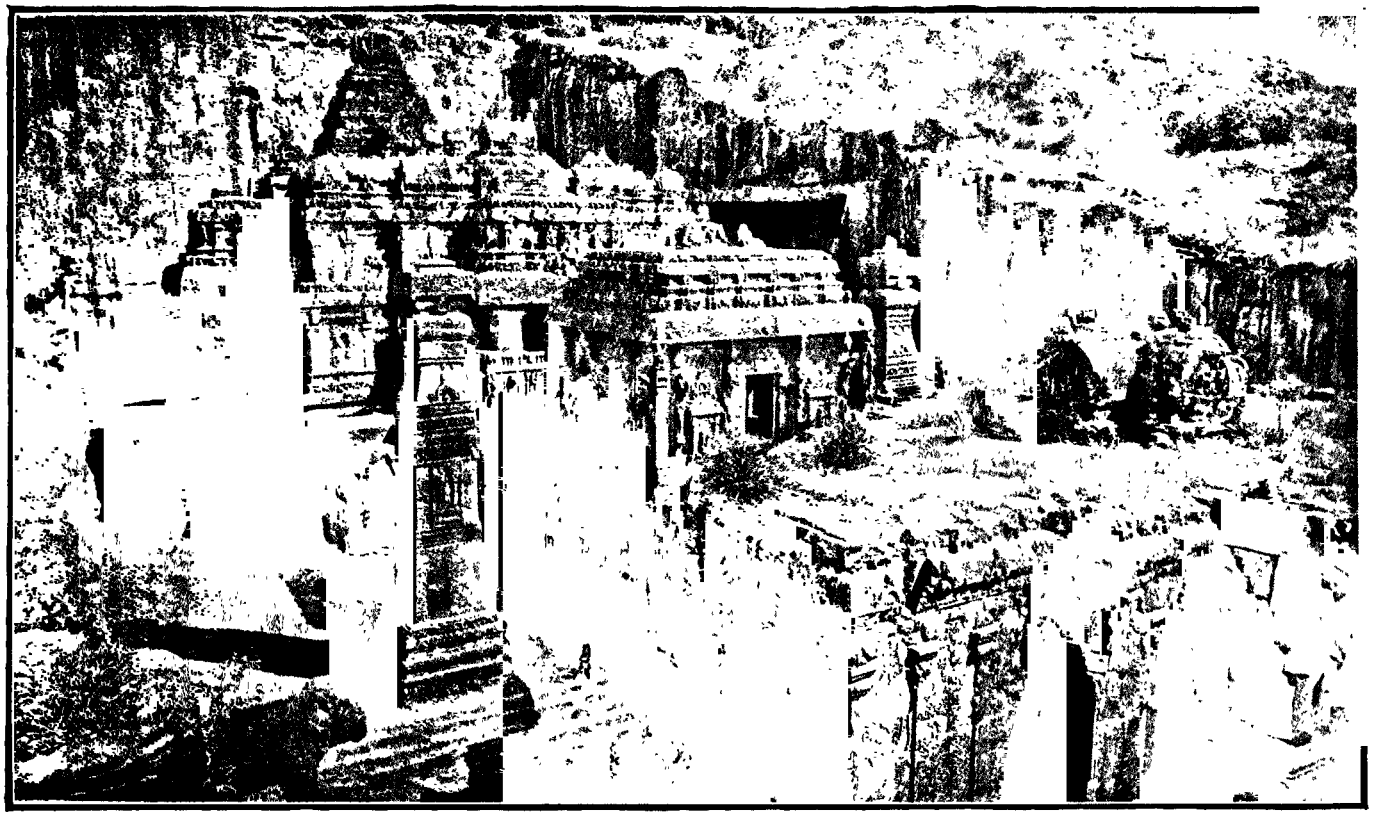




KANDARYA TEMPLE OF MAHADEO

PLATE XXIX.

ELLORA—KAILASA



(By Courtesy A. K. Coomaraswamy.)

In the Dravidian Style; this monolithic temple is hewn from a massive hill-side.

ous subsidiary temples, tanks, and sculptured halls or cloisters. The quadrangle is entered by a lofty gateway (gopuram)."[1]

This arrangement almost reminds us of some of the monasteries in miniature with their *Chaityas* resembling the shrine here. Cloisters seem a common factor, as also the surrounding wall and gateways.[2]

Architecturally, these temples we are told are not of extraordinary merit. There is hardly any change in the main form even if we look to its history. Its ornamentation[3] is magnificent, intricate and beautiful, where the best specimens are concerned. The illustrations opposite show the wealth of detail the Southerners loved, and indefatigable energy and patience that must have been theirs to produce works of this kind. This will appear even more surprising when we assert that temples of this kind are not rare, but scattered over almost every village in the Southern districts. None but a folk who loved and appreciated Art, and whose Art fulfilled a much higher purpose than merely pleasing, could shower such labour and such wealth of artistry on decoration as is shown on these Shaivite temples.

Of course what we have said of the Southern temples may equally apply to some of the best specimens of the Northern style, too, such as those at Mt. Abu. But the difference is this, that in the South, the best ones are more numerous than in the North, and the carving and sculpture is in many cases more intricate and of a higher quality.

According to Mr. J Dubreuil, the Dravidian style of architecture is absolutely original, and is hardly beholden to any foreign influence, acting either as inspiration, or even as additional *motifs*. The style is indigenous both in growth and development, almost to the present day.[4] To use the writer's words it has changed only by the path of natural evolution.[5]

> "From the earliest times up to our days, the pagodas have been constructed by workmen who formed an organised corporation. The master masons constructed always according to the method of their time with the motifs which their ancestors had transmitted to them. On account of the very especial geographical position of South India, the workmen of the Tamil country were not always in direct communication

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[1] V. Smith: *History of Fine Arts of India and Ceylon*, p. 36.

[2] Nalanda is said to have had an immense wall and several elaborate gateways.

[3] J. Dubreuil: *Dravidian Architecture*, p. 7.

[4] *Ibid.*, p 3.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

with the workmen of other countries, and had never any occasion to be inspired by foreign styles."[1]

The earliest examples of this style are the seven pagodas at Mamallapuram, all built in the 7th Century. The second stage is marked by the temples at the Pallava capital at Conjeevaram or Kanchi (705-750). The best ones are the Kailasa, Vaikuntha Perumal temples. About the same time was excavated the famous Dravid temple at Ellora, named after the Himalayan Paradise of their God Shiva, Kailasa.

The great temple at Tanjore (985-1035) together with the equally famous shrines, called Subramanya or Kartikeya, give us the third stage in the development[2] of this style.

The final zenith is reached by the enormous structures both in size and magnitude, at Rameshwaram, Tinnevelly and, Madura. These are excellent specimens, and leave the eye dazzled and mind amazed. These however, do not fall within our period ; and so we shall say no more about them. The illustrations will speak for themselves.

These temples, more than anything else, show the latent artistry of the Dravidians. They come into being simultaneously with the Shaivite revival. Why this innate genius should have been latent so long is a fact that we do not presume to explain, but certain explanations suggest themselves which may be useful. Perhaps the Dravidians were too stunned with the Aryan onslaught, and therefore, took some time to revive. This revival may be due to their native cults being merged into the Aryan God Shiva, resulting in the Shaivite awakening. Or, perhaps, the Dravidians took to using permanent material very late in the day. Whatever may be the explanation, one fact remains indisputable, that, with the rebirth of their genius, they show amazing talent which could only be the result of a great cultural heritage.

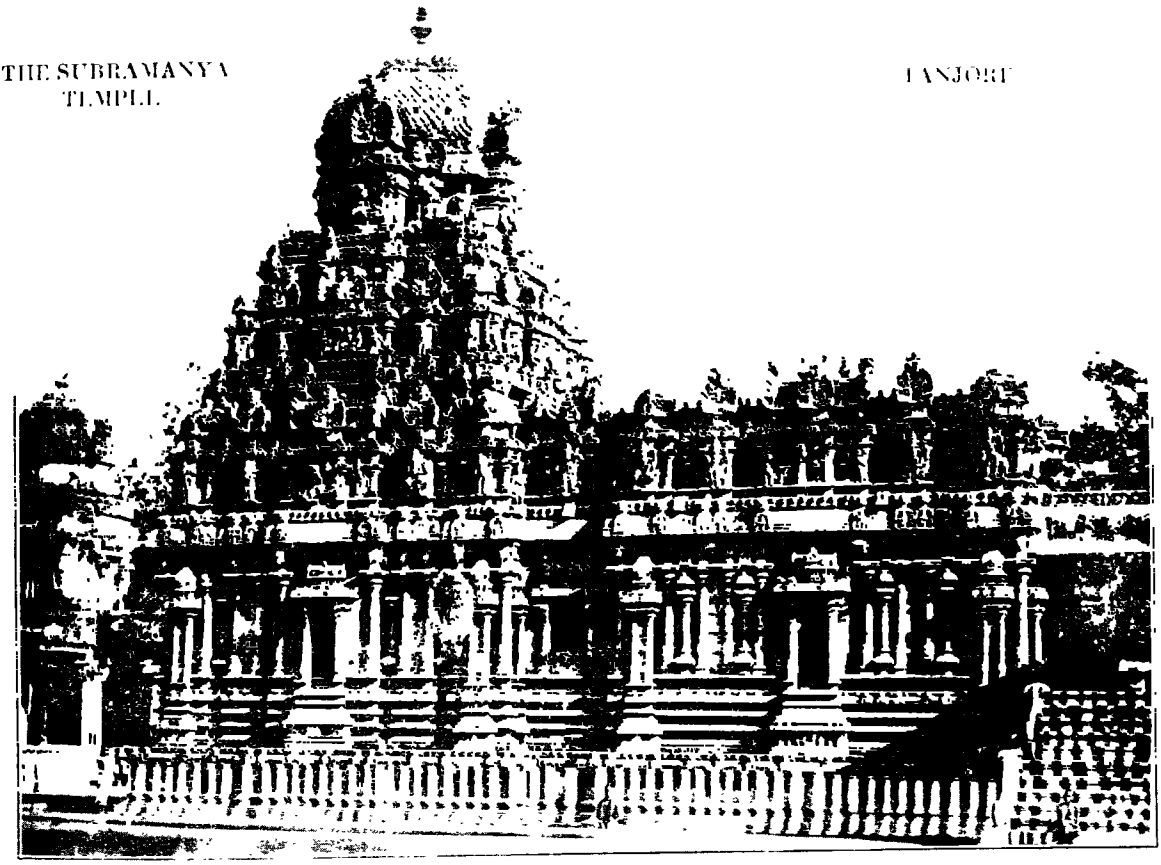
Local Styles. Besides these two main styles, there are some important intermediate and local styles. The style which Fergusson calls Chalukyan, but which V. Smith changes to the Deccan or Mysore style, is perhaps the most important of these intermediate ones. The best example of this is the unique temple at Halebid, and then Belari. The characteristics of this style are a richly carved base or plinth, supporting the temple, either polygonal or star-shaped, and roofed by a low

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

[2] The chronology and dates used here are adapted from V. Smith's *Fine Arts of India and Ceylon*, pp. 32-36.

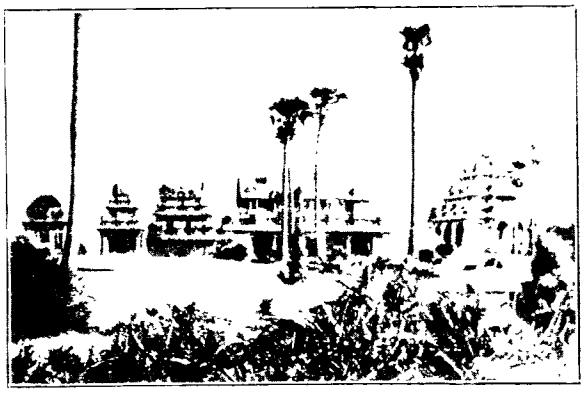
THE SUBRAMANYA TEMPLE.

TANJORE

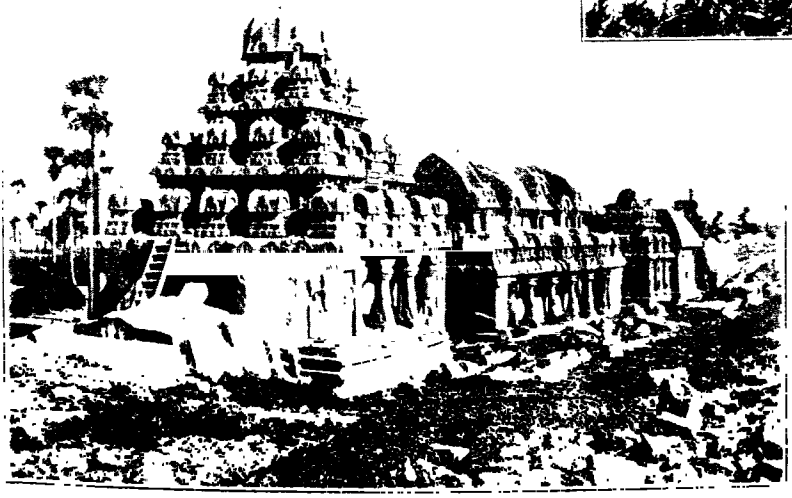


(a)

MAMALLAPURAM

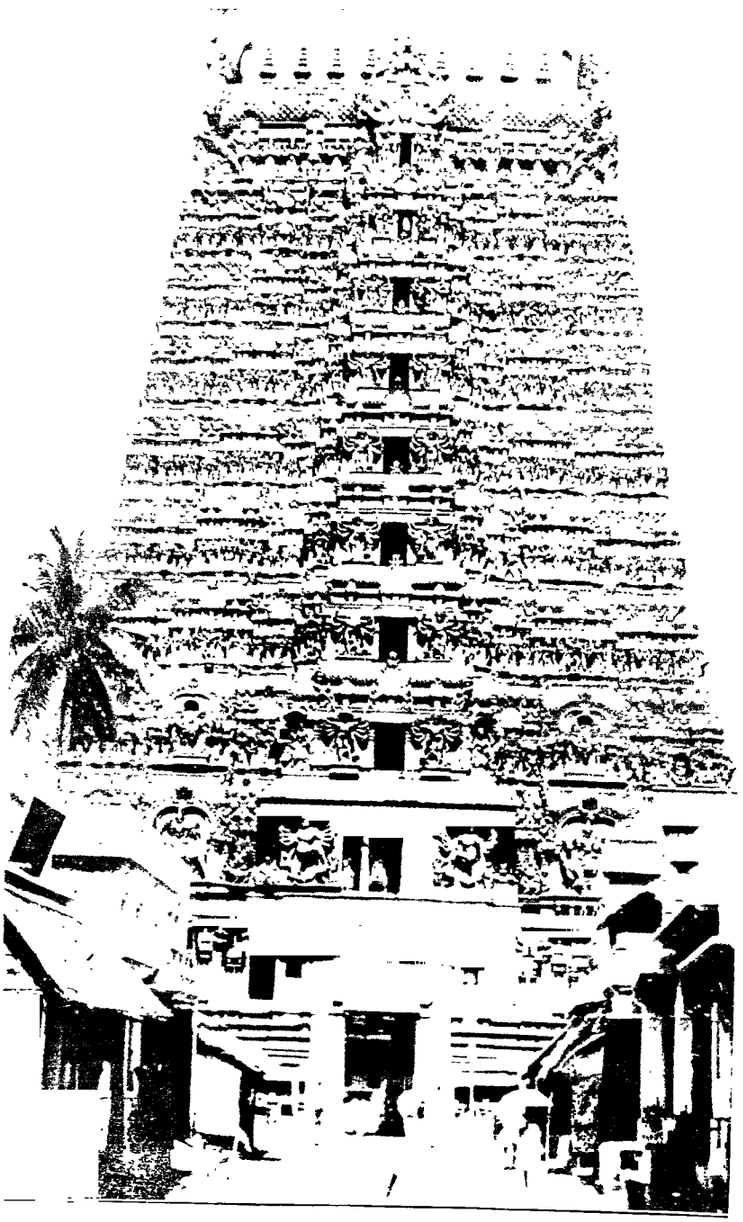


(b) The Rathas at Mamallapuram.

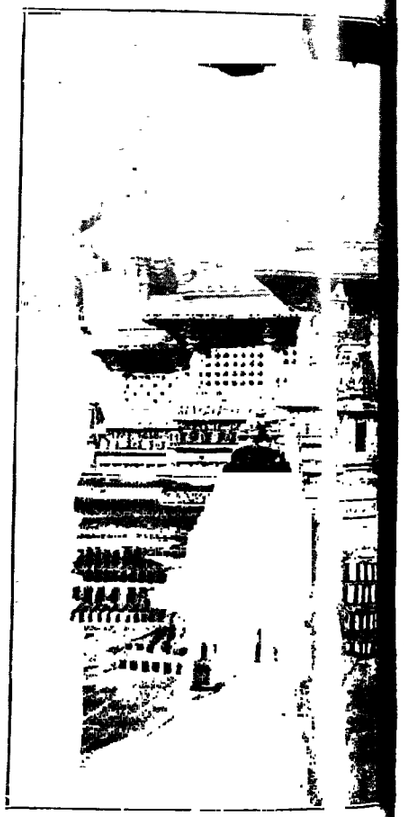


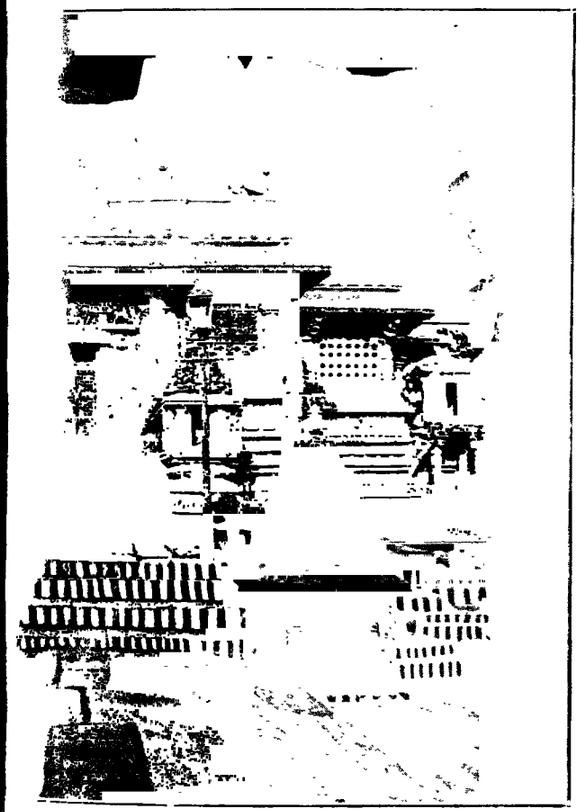
(c) Closer view of this early Dravidian Style.

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.)



(a)





(b)

THE DRAVIDIAN STYLE

(a) The Southern Gateway at Madura.

(b) The Temple Gatehead in the local style of Mysore.

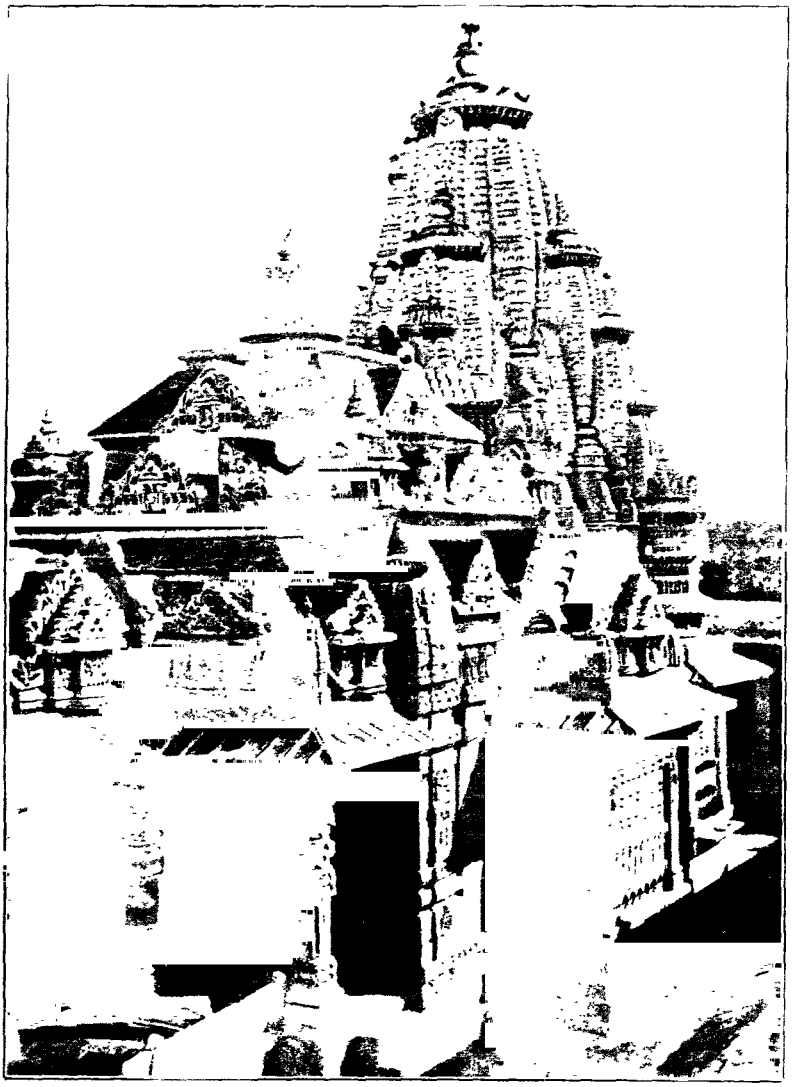
(c) Another of these Staffling Structures in peculiar southern design.



(c)

PLATE XXXII.

THE LOCAL STYLE OF GUJARAT



THE TEMPLE OF MAHAVIRA OSIA

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.)

pyramidal tower,[1] surmounted by a vase like ornament, like that of the temple of Vishnu in Mysore (1240). Other important temples of the same group are Somanath-purtrible, Hoysalesvara and Kedaresvara.

The local style of Kashmir is another one that falls within our sphere, of which the main features[2] are, the pyramidal roofs, gables, trefoil arch, quasi Doric columns, and dentil ornaments. Martand (724-60), Buniar and Vantpas (855-83) are the chief examples.

On a review—necessarily very brief and sketchy—we find the Art of architecture fairly highly developed in ancient India. The few specimens of that Art still surviving reveal, not only a sound knowledge of the technique of building, a deep appreciation of the nature and suitability of materials—wood, brick, stone, rock marble —but also a just appreciation of the beauty of proportion, a keen perception of the value of back ground on environment, an instinctive sense of harmony in design, ornamentation and symbolism. The several features of Indian architecture,—the arch, the dome, the column, the pillars, the barrel-roof and horse-shoe window,—all appear to be of native origin, and develop in majesty of proportion and richness of design in the course of the centuries after they had been invented. Non-Indian influence may have been at work to widen the conception, improve the design, or elaborate the ornamentation. But alike in the essence and its execution, the Art of architecture, a product of native growth, seems to have attained, in the India of our period, a high degree of excellence.

SECTION II. Sculpture.



Sculpture is essentially connected with architecture, and is in many sense a part of it. Apart from architecture, it exists only in the form of statues. The origin of architecture may be traced to man's desire to shelter himself as well as the Gods he worshipped, against the inclemencies of nature. Sculpture very probably arose to satisfy man's first artistic craving. Having procured for himself a shelter, he may have felt the desire to adorn it, so sculpture may have arisen purely as a decorative art. Later, there must have developed in man a desire to give a concrete form to the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 45.

powers of nature he worshipped, through the trees, mountains, stones, etc. The first concrete representation may have been no more than the rugged rock jutting out of the mountain side, or stones, or perhaps barks of trees. Later, he may have tried to give the gods the form of the animals whose might he feared, or whose flesh he ate.

As civilisation progressed, the idea may have flashed into his mind to give his Gods the same form and attributes as himself, i.e. as the ideas of the God-head became more and more rational and spiritualised, the representative Art also acquired refinement. Once having made God in the likeness of man, if the realisation dawned upon the people of the transcendental qualities of the Divine Power, how were they to represent it? This was indeed a difficult problem, and each people has solved it through its own artistic representation. Greek Art never seems to have battled with this problem at all. It made the Gods and Goddesses in the image of perfectly developed and ideally beautiful men and women as far as physical features went and was content.[1] It hardly went further. Egypt's solution seems to take refuge in the gigantic Sphinx and the colossal Pyramids. What was India's solution as evidenced by its sculpture particularly?

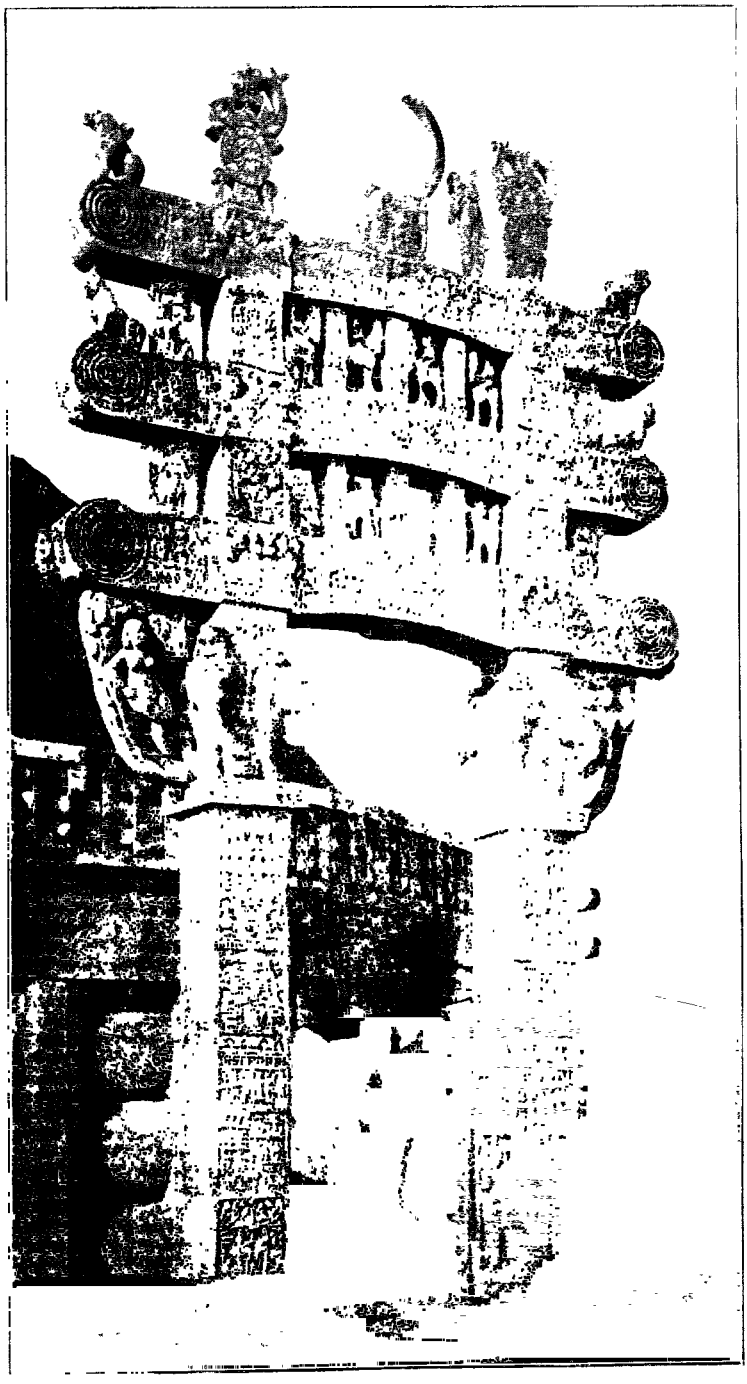
The earliest remains we have of Indian Sculpture go back only as far as Asoka, and are, therefore, Buddhist, in conception, inspiration and design, because Asoka actually propagated only the Buddhist faith. About pre-Mauryan sculpture there is hardly anything known. Sculpture was fairly well advanced is evidenced by the early style of Bharhut and Sanchi, which is said to be yet untouched by foreign influence. That this style was the direct descendant of the wooden prototype is visible from the literal transcription into the new material, even to such an extent that sometimes nails are carved into stone to make a faithful copy into the new.

The capitals of the *lats* already mentioned, are the earliest existing examples of Mauryan Sculpture. These capitals are by many supposed to be, like the pillars, both in conception and workmanship foreign. Marshall says,[2] both the idea and workmanship are foreign. Coomaraswamy[3] agrees that the origin is extra Indian, and quotes as his authority *Vishva Karma* 80, 81.[4] Boldness of treatment, naturalism and a fine polished surface acquired through

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[1] Cp. *Remark and Illustrations*, p. 152.
[2] *Cambridge History*, Vol. I, Sect. on Architecture.
[3&4] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, pp. 40-42.

PLATE XXXIII.



THE SANCHI TORANA



The Dryads or wood nymphs of Sanchi



The Chauri-bearer (Patna)



The Yakshi (Besnagar)

SANCHI (details)



(By courtesy A. K. Coomaraswamy.)

grinding and rubbing, are its chief features.[1] Besides these pillars, the other two specimens of Imperial architecture sponsored by Asoka were a pillared hall at Pataliputra, a group of rock temples at Barabara, a throne at Gaya, and a monolithic rail at Sarnath. This is all really court sculpture wherein foreign influence is evident, because the Emperor had at his court both Persian and Bactrian craftsmen, though the Persian influence is the stronger.

To enable us to appreciate the truly Indian Art of those days earlier even than Bharhut and Sanchi, we must go to the *Yaksha* and *Yakshi* of Besnagar, and the *Chauri-bearer* at Patna. The narrow waist line, swelling hips and full bosom, the characteristics of the later idealistic representation, are for the first time embodied in stone in this huge yet dignified chauri-bearer, heralding in its footsteps the marvels of Amaravati and Sarnath.

Sculpture, it must be remembered, is an Art of three dimensions, and therefore of various forms. There is sculpture in the round or statuary. In contrast to this, there is 'sculpture in relief,' which at times is medium and at others very high relief. The farther away the scene from the eye, the higher the relief used. Low relief or incised sculpture, is used when the representation is below eye level and close generally. We shall first consider sculpture in relief and then go to the sculpture in the round.

Relief Sculpture. The first Indian reliefs are those we meet with at Bharhut, and the next at Sanchi. These illustrate the story of the life of the Buddha. These reliefs adorn the rails at Bharhut and the famous gateways of the Great Stupa at Sanchi. The sculpture, so far as technique goes, is dexteriously wrought ; and relates chapter after chapter the stories from the Jatakas and reveals in relief after relief the daily life of the times. The dress, the manners, the persuits of the peoples of the Maurya period, are unfolded before our eyes, very simply and naturally in realistic technique. The workmanship at Sanchi is advanced, bold and free, hardly suffering from the inexperience so evident in the beginner. But the main question that strikes us is, is this Art really Buddhist in spirit?

What do we mean by 'Buddhist in spirit' ? Buddhism regarded life and existence as an inevitable evil, and hence suffered it. The main purpose in existence was to shorten the span of the cycles of rebirth, and obtain *Nirvana* or complete annihilation, which alone meant the end of suffering, as quickly as possible. Regarding all things of the

[1] R. D. Bannerji: *Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculpture*, p. 6.

world as tainted, the Buddhists were never happy unless when serving the Buddha, the Law, and the Sangha. The detachment from life and all it had to offer, the recognition of their futility and the piety arising therefrom, form the essence of the Buddhist spirit in Art, which is so well expressed at Ajanta, Amaravati and Borobudur as will in due course be illustrated.

Is this the spirit visible at Sanchi? These reliefs, though representing Buddhist *Jatakas* and incidents in the life of the Buddha, are not Buddhist in spirit, as the later reliefs are. They appear more like an existing Art put to a new use. Early Buddhism had closed all its doors to Art. Long before Buddhism came on the scene, Brahmanism had admitted Art into its fold. Hence, the Art forms we see at Bharhut or Sanchi may be tinctured by the Brahmanic spirit and technique, which the Buddhists were yet too young to influence. So far they had not formulated their own form of expression, and so they used the existing forms to express their ideas. Hence this early Buddhist Art of Bharhut and especially of Sanchi does not show an Art in its infancy. Rather, it is the classic achievement of an old popular Art—perhaps Brahmanic—already practised in less permanent material.[1] It is plainly not an expression of early Buddhist feeling "It is an art about Buddhism, rather than Buddhist art".

Not merely are represented in these reliefs the life and reincarnations of the Buddha, but the daily life of the people, their local gods and goddesses, such as the *Yakshas*, the *Nagas*; the common animals of their daily use, like the elephant, bull; or nature spirits, like the dryads balancing themselves from the trees of their habitation with fearless and unaffected grace all form part of the picture, and distinctly show that the Art of Sanchi is essentially pagan in its sentiment, "untinged by puritan misgivings or by mystic intuition." The same is indicated by its purely representative and realistic technique. Who can deny, whilst looking at these reliefs, that the people represented loved and enjoyed life in all its varied phases and aspects? Gay and happy folks, they appear, content with their mode of life; and do not in the least seem to be bothering either about the sorrows or the miseries of life, which, despite the rustic happiness or courtly gaiety, seem to trouble the folks both of Borobudur and Ajanta; a feature completely absent at Sanchi. The idealism and spirituality of the later days, both in out-

[1] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 57.
Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts*, p. 49.

look and treatment, is hardly found in the age when Sanchi was built ; for it had not yet thoroughly entered the lives of the people as it did with Mahayana-Buddhism and the *Bhakti-marga*.

But there is one aspect in which this Art was truly Buddhist, and that is, in not giving form to, or representing the Master, except by symbols. At times Prince Siddhartha is represented by his footsteps ; or by his halo ; or by the Bodhi tree ; but never his transformed self. In this particular aspect, the Art of Sanchi is more Buddhist than any other, because both at Amaravati and Ajanta, and also at Borobudur, the Enlightened One himself is concretely represented. Except, then, for this one aspect, the Art of Sanchi is really pagan, i.e. the existing Brahmanic Art, employed to serve Buddhist needs, and to relate Buddha's life and teachings.

Gandhara Art. About the end of the Bharhut and Sanchi period, there arises, up in the North of Aryavarta, a new school of sculpture known as the Gandhara or the Indo-Greek school of sculpture, under the patronage of the Indo-Scythian Kings of the Kushan period. The glorious epoch of this school coincides with the reign of the mighty Monarch Kanishka. The earliest specimens of this Art are dated about the 2nd Century B. C. though the majority date after Christ ; and, by about the 4th or 5th Century A. D., the style seems to have entirely disappeared or was perhaps absorbed.[1]

To these works of the Græco-Roman craftsmen or their Indian imitators great importance is attached by some writers. According to them, it is the channel through which Greek influence entered India ; and it is this new spirit, which only the Greeks could give, that gave the greatest impetus to Art in Aryavarta, and is responsible for the best sculpture on the Indian soil embodied in the reliefs of Amaravati and in the varied expressions of Gupta Art at Gaya, Mathura and Sarnath This, briefly, is the Indo-Greek theory supported by many able scholars, like Professor Grunwedel,[2] Foucher and Bachoffer.[3]

Along with the rise of the Gandhara Art, also arises the representation of the Great One in concrete form. So far the Master's presence was merely symbolised, but during this era we find concrete expression given to the racial ideal, the evolution of which has been described. It was the Indo-Greek artist who

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[1] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 53.
[2] *Buddhist Sculpture.*
[3] Bachoffer: *Early Indian Sculpture.*
Bannerji: *Eastern School of Medieval Sculpture*, p. 9.

gave form to the Master's image and hence the importance of Gandhara Art for Indian Iconography. What the nature of this first representation was is not known. Whatever it was, it was not the realisation of a racial ideal, as merely a glance at the sculpture will show.

Take some of the Buddhas of the school,—the ones opposite are the good representations—and place besides them the Buddhas from Anuradhapura or Sarnath, or Java. The difference is obvious even to the most untrained eye. The latter in their calm passionless ecstasy, give forth to men and generations, the message of utmost piety of which they are the results. What do the former remind us of? To use Havel's words ..."We find Apollo posing in the attitude of an Indian Yogi to represent the Buddha." There seems to be in the representation none of the *Bhakti* and reverence that enfused the very being of the Indian craftsmen and which transfused into his creation all that idealism, which was not the result of one genius, or one age, but the product and fusion of racial elements nurtured on the fertile plains of the Ganges and the Saraswati, breathing forth all the mysticism of the Vedas, the philosophy of the *Upanishads* and the piety of Buddhism.

Its hybrid nature is irritating; for, this Art has no message to give, no struggle to reveal, in fact no truth to tell, for it in itself is the product of insincerity made to serve commercial ends. What did the Greeks and Bactrians who fashioned this style, know of the love and devotion of that towering personality that suffered himself to save mankind? These thoughts filled the Indian artist with their inspiration, while the Indo-Greek craftsmen were merely asked to adapt their provincial Roman forms, born of a different ideal to this new end; and they did the best they could. As for the Buddhas with the moustaches that these craftsmen fashioned, they are an atrocity perpetrated on Indian Art. So alien are they to the nature of Indian Art and idealism, that never was Indian Art insulted to a greater degree, than when it was suggested that it was from this freakish off-springs that the mighty expression of the peoples at Amaravati, Sarnath and Mathura drew their inspiration.

In this section, we are trying to explain the various concrete forms the ideals of Indian Art amplified in the previous chapter, took. This Art of Gandhara, so alien to Indian conception and ideals can hardly find a place in such an exposition, and it would not have been necessary even to refer to it, but for the over-anxious enthusiasts who cannot stand the sight of anything beautiful in the world with-

PLATE XXXV.

GANDHARA SCHOOL



(a) The Buddha

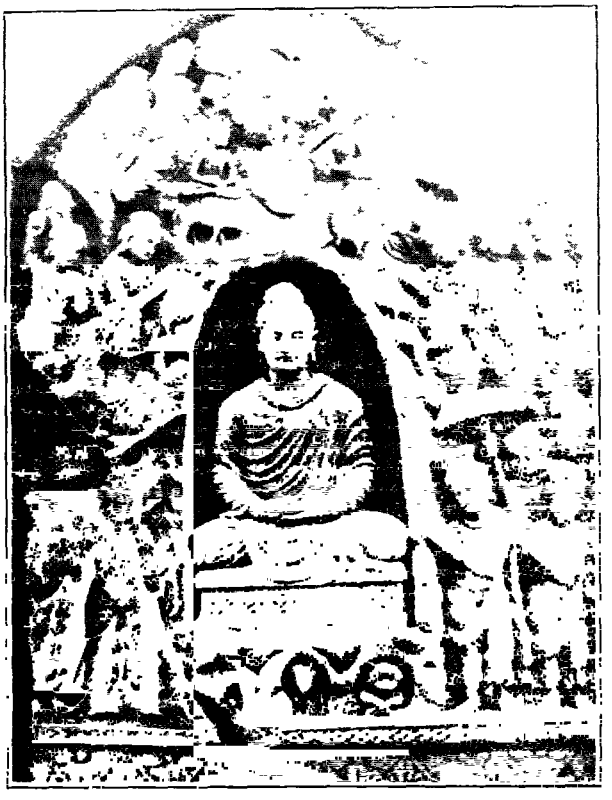


(b) The Buddha



(c) The Buddha

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)



(d) Indra's visit to Buddha
PESHWAR



(e) The Bodhisattva

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

out making an attempt to trace the origins of it to Greece, to them the fount and source all civilisation and culture. We, the dwellers of the East, where the most antiquated civilising processes worked themselves out so wonderfully, look upon Greece with no such reverence, but only as one of the many beautiful blossomings of the genius of the human race.

Perhaps the Gandhara Art did give Indian Art a few new motifs and technical ideas, such as a new style in base relief; concrete representation of the Buddha[1] etc., reproductions of which any technical book on the subject will illustrate, but with which we do not need to trouble, as they did not in any form aid the great national expression of the ideals of Indian Art, which were being so successfully tackled at Amaravati and in the local schools of Mathura and Benares, especially at Sarnath.

At Amaravati, where the next important group of Buddhist reliefs is found, unlike Sanchi, we see a truly Buddhist Art both in theme and sentiment, coming into existence. In these reliefs (2nd Century A. D.)[2] far down South, near Madras, and in Ceylon at Anuradhapura, we have the Buddhist spirit proper for the first time manifesting itself. This development is explained by the change in the Buddhist thought and theology. Another reason why we turn to Amaravati for the purest expression of Buddhist Art is, because the Art here is not tinctured with foreign influences such as in the North due to the rise and development of the Gandhara Art of the Kushan period.

During the early stages of Buddhism, Buddha was the guru, who laid out a new path that was to be followed to reach the end of suffering, namely *Nirvana*. Buddha as a God, or a figure for worship, was never recognised by the early Buddhists. But, as time went on, and the living force of the Hindu social structure asserted itself, the Buddha was endowed with all the qualities of a transcendental God-head, all the physical attributes of a perfect Superman.[3] The spirit of Bhakti (worship) of the later days is creeping in, as is so evident in the 'sculptured relief' at Amaravati where the women are so devoutly paying their respects to the Buddha. It is evident from the spirit of the sculpture though the Buddha is still unrepresented in that relief, that He had come already to be looked upon as an object of adoration. In the racial vision He had already taken a con-

[1] Bannerji: *Eastern School of Med. Sculpture*, p. 9.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 50.
[3] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 49.

crete form. Very probably, in private houses, the image of the Master had by this time begun to have its hallowed niche, long before it did in the public. It must be remembered, the Buddhist laity were in their ways of living, Brahmanic; for, apart from the *Sangha* and Monasticism, Buddhism had no specific institutions that affected the daily life of the community. As Brahmanic social institutions guided the lives of these lay Buddhists, they could not have had that apprehension against the image that the Bhikshus had. The images of the Hindu Gods were already in use about the 2nd Century B. C.[1] Hence, it would not be at all incorrect to say, that the Buddha's image must have come into private use a little after Sanchi.

The earliest public image of the Buddha now extant is in the Ajanta caves (1st Century B. C.). When actually the first real representation was exhibited in public we do not know; but it must have been about this time, or a little earlier, because after that, images and representations in relief are found in abundance. The first representation of the person of the Master, therefore, must have been a great event in the history of Art. For the first time, we have represented in concrete form the ideals of a people and of a religion; "for the Gods are the dreams of a race, in whom its intentions are perfectly fulfilled. From them we come to know of its innermost desires and purposes"[2] How did the ancients represent this divine ideal in concrete form?

In order to answer this question, we must go back to Indian philosophical thought, and ascertain the part *Yoga*, or mental concentration, played in Indian life. We have tried to explain the relation between *Yoga* and Art; and the use of *Yoga* for attaining perfection in almost all branches of human activity. Mental concentration was used in India as a means by which the end could be attained, alike by the rishi and the householder, the quickest and the most efficiently. The *Shilpa Shastras*, or the technical treatises had prescribed particular poses to be taken in order to make the concentration easy. The picture of a Yogi had been, from time immemorial, very familiar to the Indian.[3] Prince Siddhartha after he left his palace, and took upon

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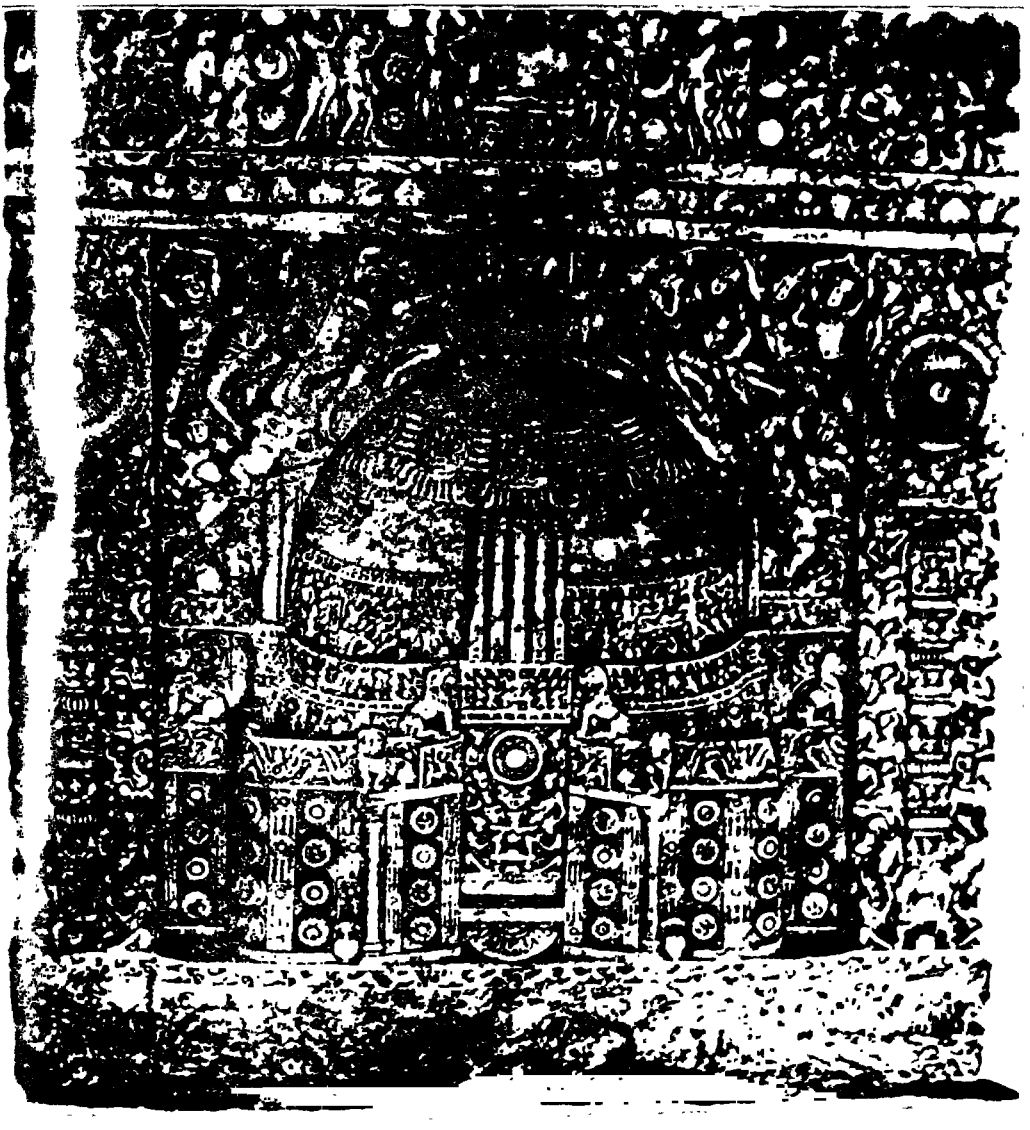
[1] *Indian Antiquary*—1909—pp. 145-149, dates them 4th Cent. B. C.

[2] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 50.

[3] A seal from Mohenjodaro has engraved on it a man sitting in a similar posture.—Marshall: *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Valley Civilisation*—Seals, p.

PLATE XXXVI.

AMARAVATI STUPA



STUPA SCULPTURED ON MARBLE SLAB

Madras Museum.

PLATE XXXVII.

AMARAVATI

STUPA

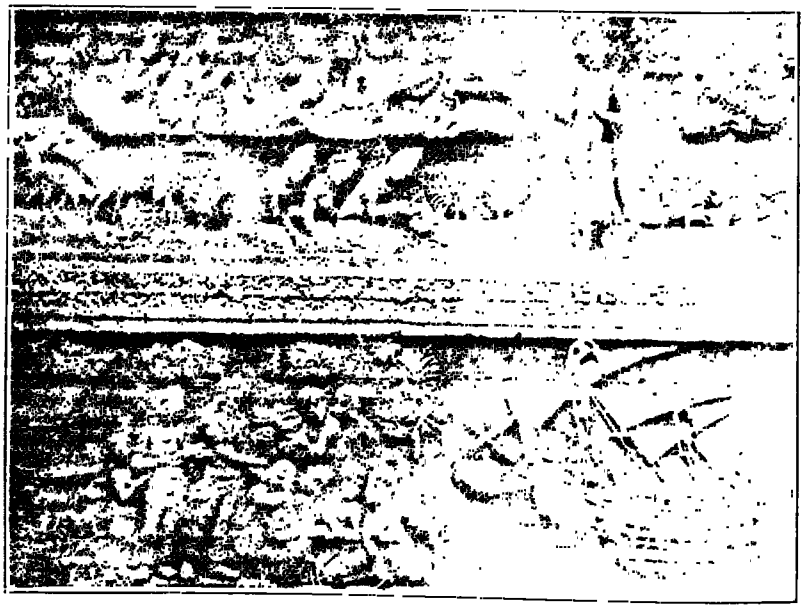


DISC



Relief from Amaravati. The powerful representation of the bull so keen and alive should be observed.

BOROBUDUR



JAVA

The finest expression of Indo-Javanese-Art

(Indian Sculpture & Painting, Havel.)

himself the life of a wanderer, once sat fasting and meditating under the *Bodhi* tree. How else could he meditate, but in the posture of a Yogi? There, whilst in a trance, there flashed upon him the great intuition—the Truth—the means by which suffering could be ended, and also the cause of it. This knowledge meant a new birth for him ; and he henceforth became the Buddha, or the Enlightened One.

With this dramatic episode ever in their mind, and the presence of a Yogi always before their eyes, what other form could the race genius choose to express its divine ideal in, but that of the Buddha, as enlightenment dawned upon him,—the *Divine Yogi*? Thus we find that when this race-ideal was given a concrete form, the Buddha takes the place of the Yogi.

The earliest extant representation of the Buddha as the 'Divine Yogi' is at the Amaravati.[1]

In the Art Reliefs of Amaravati we see Indian sculpture, passing from the naturalistic school of the Asokan epoch, into the idealistic school in which Indian Art reached its highest expression. These sculptures are regarded by Fergusson and his followers as the culminating point in Indian sculpture. All that follows is, according to them, rapidly deteriorating. In view of the rich and fruitful classical period that followed, we can hardly accept this view. The Amaravati sculptures Havel dates at the 'last half of the second century A.D.'[2] If we accept this date, then the Gupta period, and the golden age of Indian culture that follows, all come later than Amaravati. These abound in masterpieces of Indian sculpture, as will be soon shown. This makes Fergusson's proposition entirely untenable.

Havel's estimate seems more correct when he says—

> "though they are far from being the best Indian sculpture, there is much beautiful work in the traditions of Sanchi as upheld in the most delightful studies of animal life, combined with extremely beautiful conventionalised ornament. The most varied and difficult movements of the human figure are drawn and modelled with great freedom and skill. The action and the grouping of the figures are singularly animated, sometimes to an exaggerated degree."[3]

The Indian ideal, which we see represented and developing at Amaravati, was finally perfected several centuries later at Java, Ceylon and in Aryavarta proper, in the Gupta Art.

The next important group of Buddhist relief sculpture we have, is at Borobudur, Java. Java was colonised by the people from

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[1] Havel: *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 102.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.
[3] Havel: *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 114.

Gujarat and the Kathiawad peninsula. One of the Indo-Scythian Kings of these parts was foretold that his country would soon be over-run and that he would lose his sovereignty. The terrified monarch made speedy preparations for the coming calamity. His son with a large party of colonists went to Java, as a safe retreat in case of mishap; and hence the Javanese rulers trace their descent from the Indo-Scythian Kings. At the time of the colonisation, the prince had taken with him craftsmen, builders, architects, masons, sculptors and artists. Hence it may be suggested, that the Art that developed in Java after this period is of Indian origin and inspiration. The sculptured reliefs of the famous stupas and temples of Borobudur and Cambodia may, with perfect assurance be regarded as developments of the Buddhist Art after the 10th Century A. D., i.e. after its decline in Aryavarta.

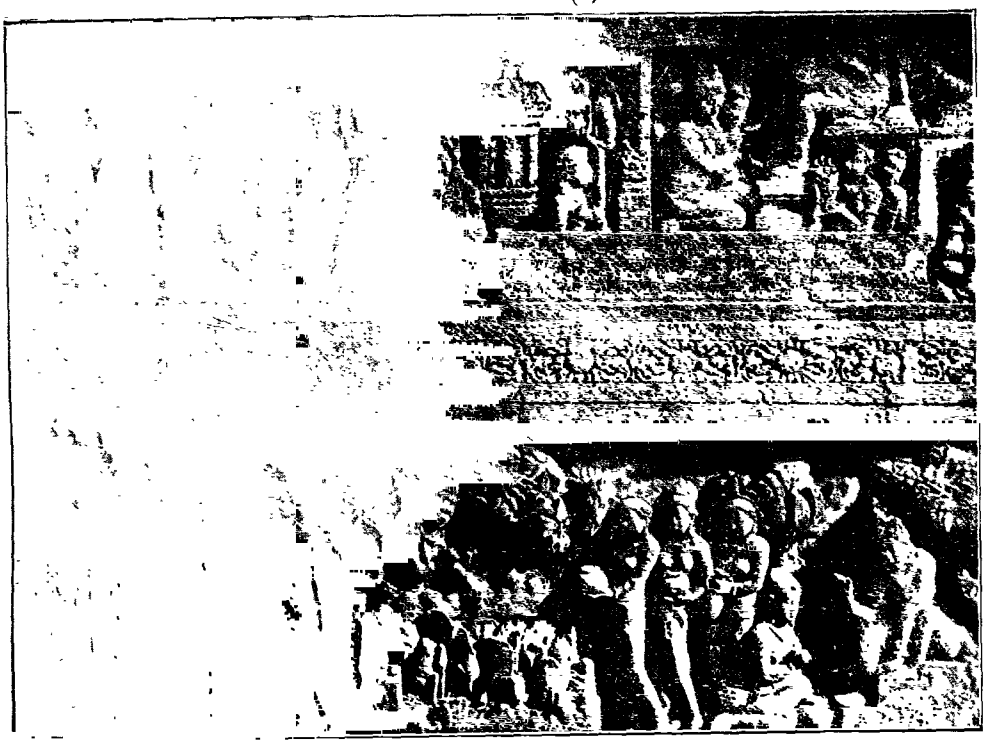
These great reliefs adorn the procession paths of the fine galleries of the great shrine at Borobudur. They extend for a length of nearly three miles, and expound, in ordered sequence, the history, mythology, and philosophy of the Buddhist Faith.[1] "For the devout Buddhist pilgrims who paced these sculptured galleries, they were illustrated scriptures, which even the most ignorant could read, telling effectively the life story and Message of the Master." These reliefs are the Indian sculptor's highest achievement in the treatment of real life.

> "The spiritual power of their art has broken the chains of technical rules, risen above all thoughts of what critics call right or wrong, and speaks with divinely inspired words straight to the heart of the listener. In this heaven-born quality of inspiration, European art has rarely equalled, and never excelled the art of Borobudur."[2]

Here, as in the Indian ideal type the smaller anatomical details of the figures are suppressed, but the real spark of life, the essence or feeling is wonderfully manifested. Every group and every figure is absolutely true and sincere in expression, face, gesture, and pose of the body. The action which links the groups and single figures together, is strongly and simply told, without effort or striving after effect; "it was so, because so it could only be".[3] The study of these reliefs is a liberal Art education in itself. This ends our survey of important Buddhist relief sculpture.

Iconography. The earliest sculptures in the round that we have, excepting the Mauryan finds at Patna, are perhaps the

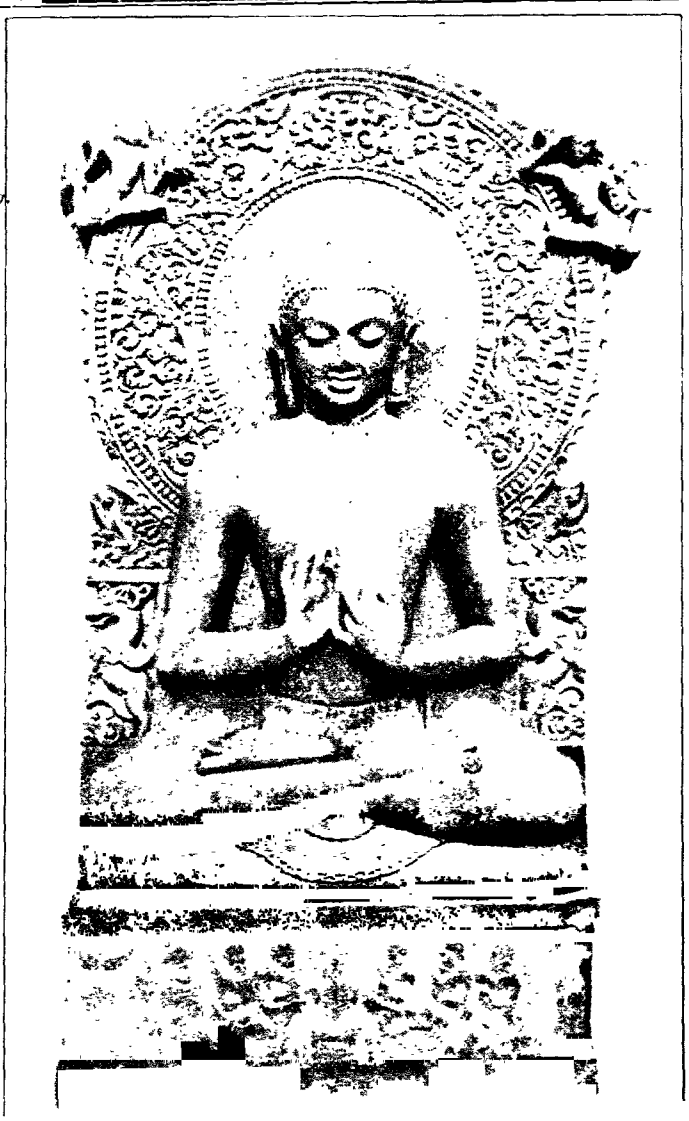
[1] *Ibid.*, p. 114.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[3] *Ibid.*



(a)

(a) BOROBUDUR. The grace and rhythm of the women drawing water from the well, is so skilfully rendered in this refined art.

(Indian Sculpture & Painting. Havel.)



(b) THE SARNATH BUDDHA. A typical example of the exquisite art of the Gupta period

(b)

(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)

PLATE XXXVIII.



(a) The Buddha as a preacher. Erect pose with the abhaya mudra. (Birmingham Museum.)



(b) A torso from Sanchi. Perphaps the ideal Kshatriya type.

BRAHMANIC SCULPTURE



(c) The Marriage of Shiva and Parvati (Ellora).

dryads at Sanchi, forming part of the gateways of the stupa. Icons were in existence for worship in private homes. That statues were also designed is evident from the epics, where Rama has a special golden statue made of Sita to complete his horse-sacrifice. Of these early Brahmanic images and statues we have no trace.

The earliest images we have are Buddhist, representing the Buddha The idealism behind the statues of the Buddha we have discussed in the chapter on 'Ideals of Indian Art'. Early Buddhism being a protestant creed, naturally objected to the current Brahmanic practice of Image-worship. But, in course of time, and by force of contact, the silent might of popular tradition told upon the protestants ; and they modified their primitive protestantism by admitting impressions of the Master's feet, or his Bodhi tree, or any such index to represent their Lord in their halls of prayer and worship. The practice thus creeping in grows, till, in Mahayana Buddhism, the Enlightened one is represented life-like as in any temple of the Hindus.

The Buddha in Buddhist Art was mostly represented as the *Guru* or teacher in the *Yogi* pose, or as a king or the Bodhisatva. The Bodhisatva

> "is the ideal Kshatriya king of the Mahabharata who has learnt to subdue himself so that he may dispense divine Justice and become God's viceregent on earth. But he fights only with spiritual weapons, which, like those of the great Aryan heroes, are personified and made to take places in the Buddhist pantheon as various manifestations of the Buddhissatva e.g. Divine Love, Avalokiteshvara, and Divine Wisdom or Manjusri."[1]

The Buddha as the *Guru* in the posture of the *Yogi* is best depicted at Ajanta (outside Cave IX), Sarnath, Java, and Anuradhapura These are all seated postures of the *Yogi* style, except for the Ajanta sculpture. Of all these the best is the statue from Ceylon regarded by Havel, Coomaraswamy and V. Smith, as a masterpiece. The Sarnath Buddha comes next in merit, and is an exquisitely wrought specimen in Gupta style.

Of the Buddha at Anuradhapura, particularly, and of the other figures of the Buddha yogi represented,—in short of the whole *motif*,—Coomaraswamy[2] says—

> "This figure is a purely monumental art as that of the Egyptian pyramids, and since it represents the greatest ideal which Indian sculpture ever attempted to express, it is well that we find preserved even a few magnificent examples of comparative early date."

[1] Havel: *Handbook of Indian Art*, p. 152.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 51.

Utter tranquillity and absolute serenity are stamped in every line of the figure, that has passed through the stages of human conflict triumphantly, and has acquired 'passionless' peace, a state devoid of all emotions. The 'eyes that look not without but within' show that their concern is not with things of the world. The repose of the hands and the whole body generally suggest intense concentration of the mind; and the lowered eyelids of the Yogi enhance this effect. The physical proportions are beautiful, and the technique of the statue masterly. "Indian sculpture has perhaps never produced any finer single statue than this."[1]

Another form given to the Buddha as a teacher is the "erect pose", with the *abhaya mudra*. In this manner he is represented typically at Mathura and Sarnath. There is also a famous statue in this pose at the Birmingham Museum in metal from Bengal. It is in the Gupta style and is a fine piece of sculpture in the round. Dignity and refinement are brought out very skilfully by a simple yet effective technique; and, at a glance impress the observer.

The Buddha as the ideal King or Bodhisatva, is best represented by a torso from Sanchi at the Victoria and Albert Museum. From its ornaments, it appears to be the ideal Kshatriya type,[2] and even more so from the lithe sinewy figure. Movement is so well portrayed, that despite its condition the spark of manhood is there for even a casual observer. Now let us turn our gaze to the Brahmanic sculpture.

Brahmanic Sculpture.

How did the Brahmanic philosophy expressed its divine ideals? Its two generic *motifs*, the *Trimurti* and the *Nataraj*, their conception and representation, have been discussed in the preceding chapter on the Ideals of Indian Art. Here we will examine the various other forms the Brahmanic ideal gave birth to, and review some of them.

The main Brahmanic deities are the Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, with their respective *Shaktis*—Saraswati, Luxmi and Parvati. There are other minor deities too, but the ideals of a race are mainly indicated by the chief God, so we will study their representations only. Brahma later on gets absorbed in the Vishnu and Shiva Cult, hence his temples are very rare. The best representations of him are at Java and Elephanta.[3]

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[1] Havel: *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 29.
[2] Havel: *History of Indo-Aryan Civilisation*, p. 157.
[3] *Handbook on Indian Art*, p. 162.

PLATE XXXIX.

BRAHMANIC SCULPTURE FROM MAMALLAPURAM



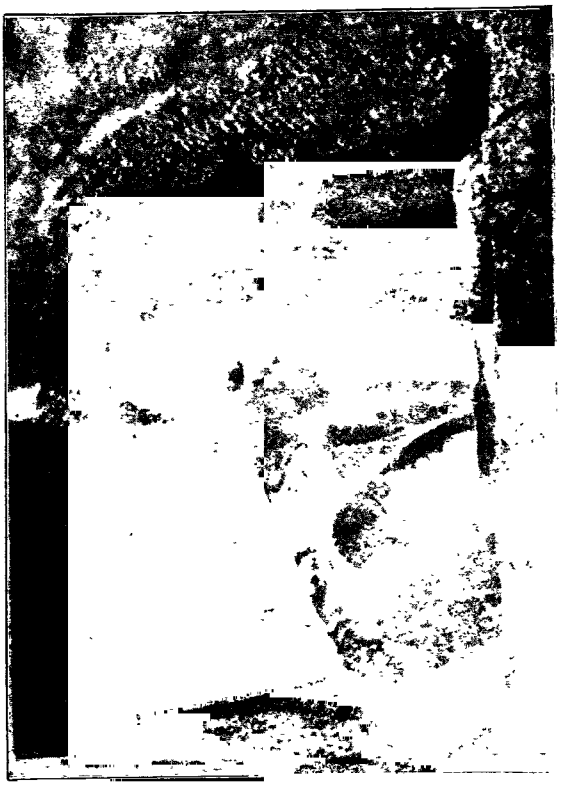
(a) Vishnu reclining on the serpent Ananta. Luxmi is to the extreme right paying homage.

(By courtesy A. K. Coomaraswamy)



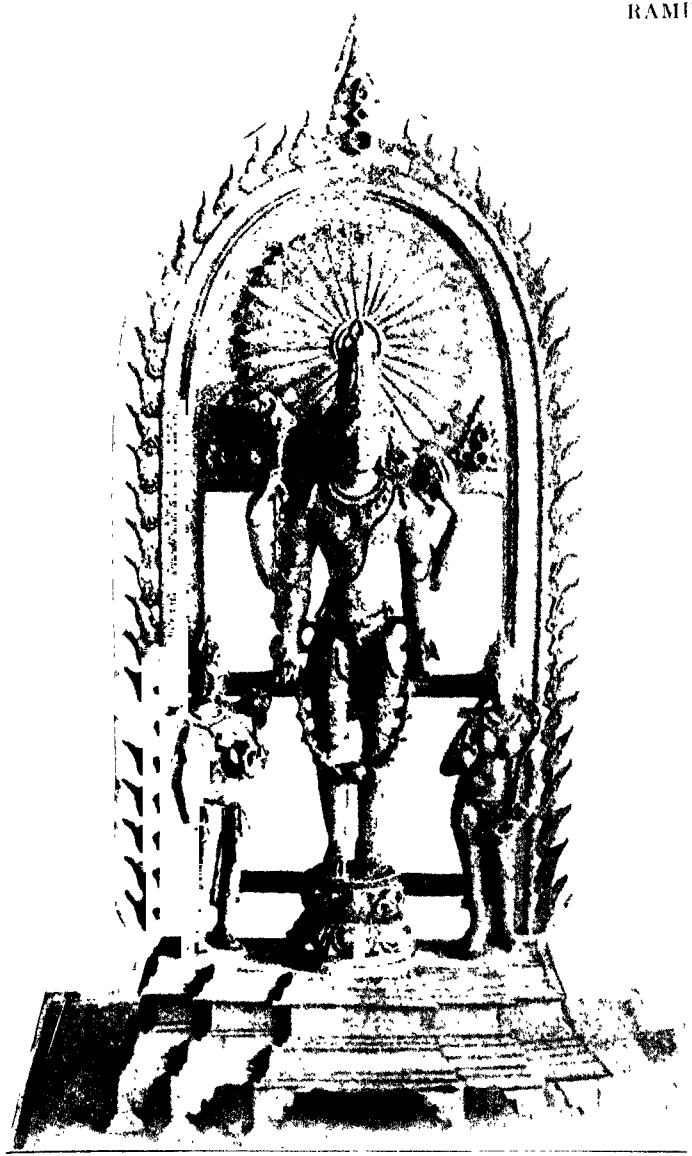
(b) The Penance of Arjuna.

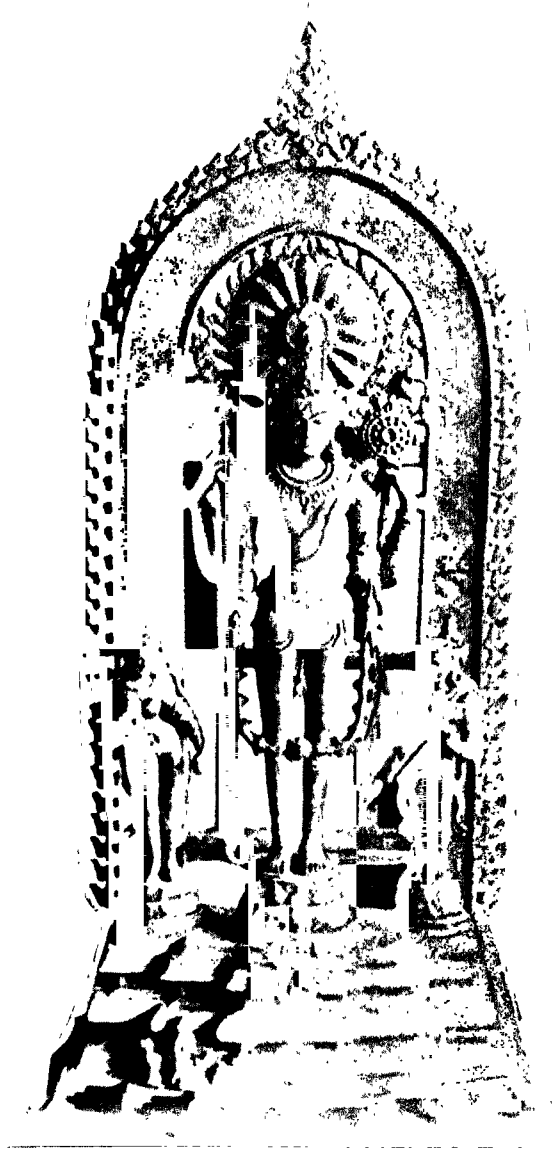
(Copyright Archaeological Survey of India)



(c) The saint Kapila in a thoughtful mood.

(By courtesy A. K. Coomaraswamy)





Brahma. The Brahma at Java is magnificent in its grandeur and dignity. The *Trimurti*, besides representing the cosmic energy in its three phases of Creation, Preservation and Destruction, is said symbolically to represent the three great principles of *Rajas*, *Sattva*, *Tamas* signifying activity, intelligence, and inertia ;[1] and also the fundamental stages in the life of man, such as Childhood, Maturity and Old Age, drawn from the Aryan ideal of life, consisting of the *Brahmacharin*, the *Grahasta* and *Sannyasi*.[2] Brahma accordingly is the creator and the *brahmacharin* combined and must therefore represent actively all these varied aspects of race mythology. These have been brilliantly combined by the artist in the majestic figure of Brahma at Java.

Vishnu. Vishnu, the preserver, is often represented reclining on his serpent Ananta. His shrine faces the East, so that Laxmi, his bride, may enter from the East as she rises from the Cosmic Ocean. His images are generally in three popular forms. The first is *Ananta Sayi Narayana*, where the God reclines with lordly ease on the spiral back of the serpent Ananta, with the Goddess Lakshmi by his side. This makes a very elaborate and effective decorative motif and adorns the stones at Ellora and Badami.

The next important form of Vishnu is as *Vasudeva*. Here he wears a high mitre called *Kirita*, and a long garland called *Vanamala*, and is represented as an unqualified intelligent being.[3] In fact here the God takes a human form, but still retains his transcendental nature, which is represented by his four arms and hands each holding a symbolic representation. Lakshmi is Vishnu's *shakti* or female principle without which the God is incomplete. She is the embodiment of virtue, the goddess of beauty and wealth. About the best representation of her is at Ellora and Mamallapuram, where she is churned out of the Cosmic Ocean by the gods and demons as a prize and bride for the Preserver of Creation Vishnu. Together the 'Vishnu and Lakshmi' *motif* represents the ideal of conjugal love.

Vishnu is found in the reliefs at Mamallapuram, Aihole, Ellora in the shrine of the Ten Avatars, and at Badami. All these sculptures are in relief ; very expressive and fine specimens of deft fingers, that produced an Art so marvellous that they have made the hard granite speak. The churning of the ocean, associated with Vishnu's second

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[1] C. C. Bhattacharya: *Indian Images*, p. 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[3] Bhattacharya: *Indian Images*, p. 10.

avatar of the tortoise, out of which arose the day-break goddess, Vishnu's bride, is a very poetic myth, equally poetically rendered at Mamallapuram and Ellora in some of the best sculpture.

Shiva. Shiva has innumerable shrines devoted to him, as well as statues and bronzes. He represents the *tamasic* or the destructive powers of the cosmos. His shrine faces the West, where the life-giving sun sets after his daily round. He is represented in two aspects, as the Great *Yogi* or *Mahadeva* and also in his tamasic aspect as Shiva the Destroyer or *Bhairava*. In South India his most famous aspect, that of the *Nataraj*, is not either the first or the second, but really represents the whole Cosmic Energy in the form of Creation, Preservation and Destruction. In these various forms Shiva is sculptured best at Ellora, Elephanta and Badami.

At Ellora Shiva is represented with his Shakti Uma or Parvati—i.e. the *Uma-Mahesvara motif*—at the summit of mount Kailasa. Below is Ravana trying to overthrow the mountain. Parvati is alarmed and in terror clutches hold of Shiva's arm. The God subdues and with the pressure of his left toe, presses back the demon. The whole action is suggestively rendered. The dignified calm of the *Yogi* is undisturbed ; in spite of the strenuous efforts of the demon god, and the mighty force he brings to his aid in his many headed and armed form and contrasts beautifully with the alarmed Parvati. Other events of Shiva's life such as his marriage form the subject matter of both Elephanta and Ellora.

Another favourite representation, is of the Mighty God in his *Bhairava* aspect, both at Ellora and Elephanta, dancing his dance of destruction in a terrific frenzy. Here the movement and tremendous force is very skilfully brought out and strikes one in spite of the mutilation, especially at Elephanta.

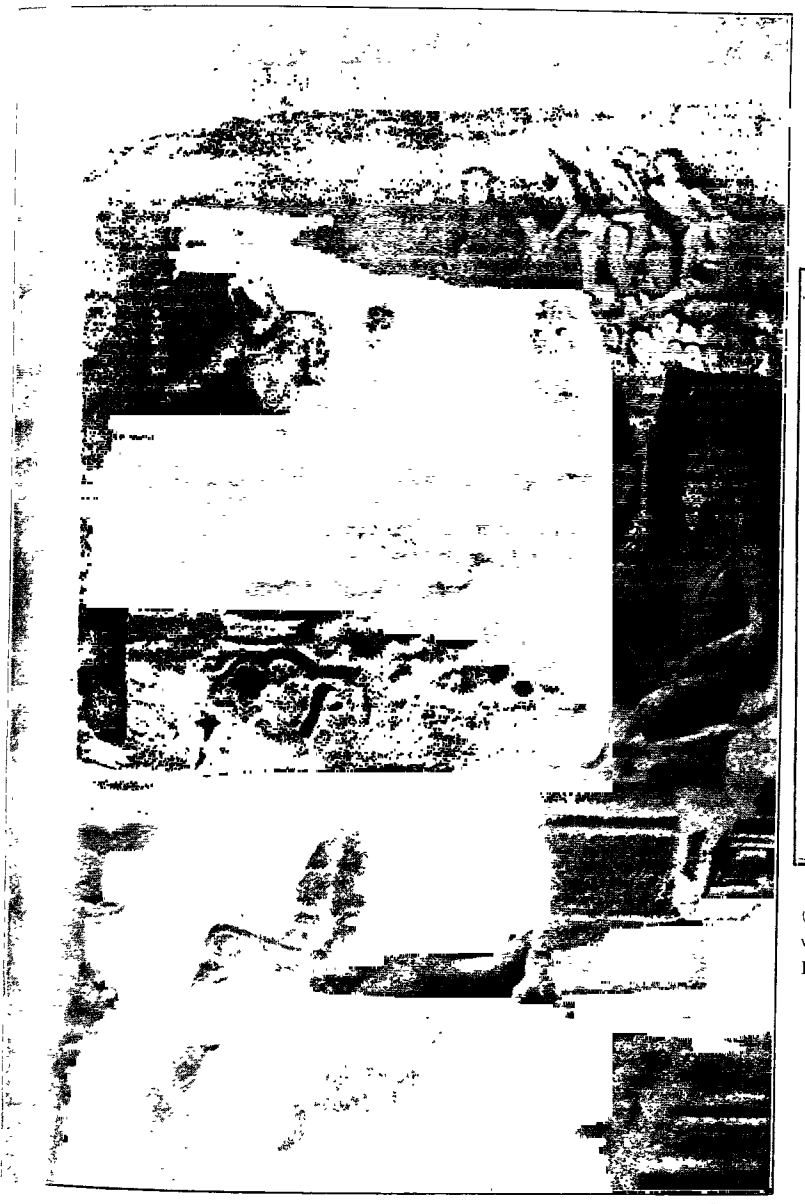
In these cave temples of Elephanta and Ellora, the Indian sculptors—

> "played with chaiaroscuro, in great masses of living rock, with the same feeling as the Gothic cathedral builders, or as Wagner played with tonal effects, hewing out on a colossal scale the grander contrasts of light and shade to give a fitting atmosphere of mystery and awe to the paintings and sculptures which told the endless legends of Buddha, or the fantastic myths of the Hindoo Valhalla."

The next style of sculpture are the Hindu temple reliefs. They are too numerous and scattered for us to be able to do even the least justice to the study within our limited scope. Some of them are mainly decorative, having little value as sculpture ; whilst others,

PLATE XLI.

BRAHMANIC SCULPTURE



(a) Shiva and Parvati at Kailasa; Ellora



(b) The sylph-like form of a dryad, climbing with free and graceful movement, from Besnagar



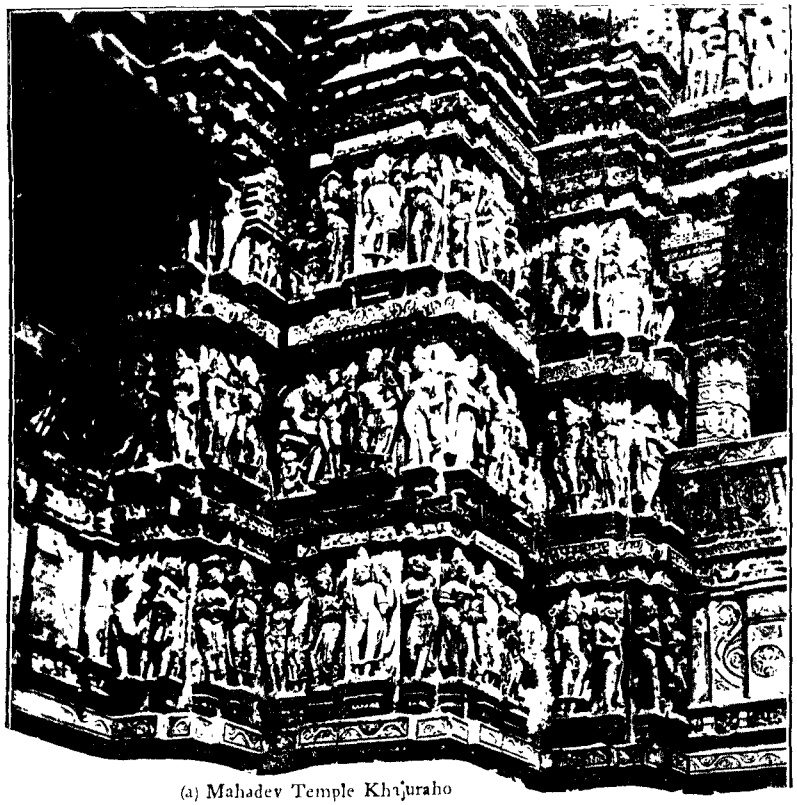
(c) Shiva Parvati Badami

(By courtesy Prince of Wales Museum Bombay.)

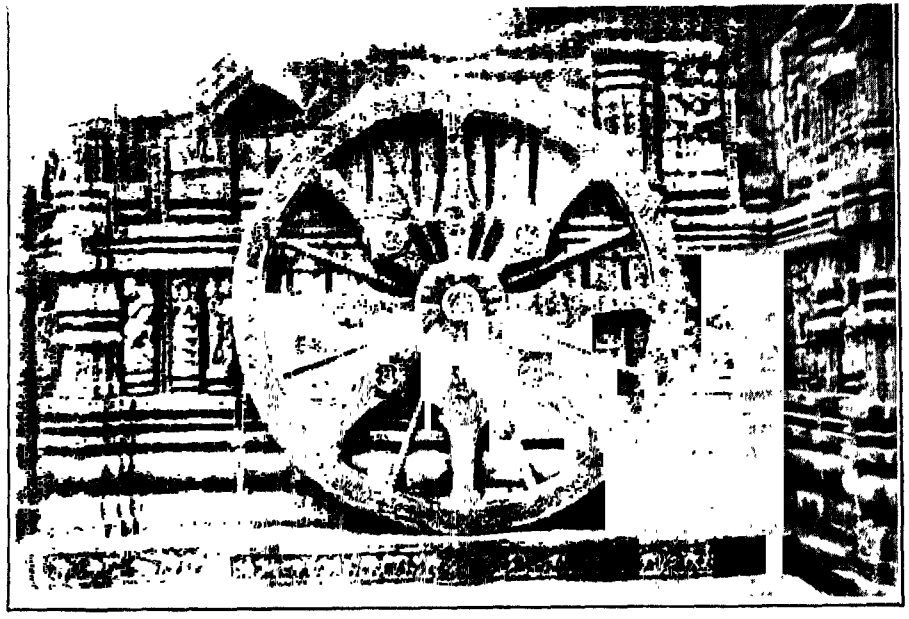


(d) Details from Bhuvaneshwara

(By courtesy A. K. Coomaraswamy.)



(a) Mahadev Temple Khajuraho



(b) Surya Temple, Konarak. The wheel of the chariot of the Sun-god



(c) A massive horse being lead from Konarak



(Copyright: Archaeological Survey of India)

besides serving their purpose within the architectural scheme, and enhancing the charm of the building as decoration, are finely wrought pieces of workmanship, that may be ranked with some of the really good specimens of Indian sculpture. Some of these specimens from Bhuvaneshwara and Konorak, Halebid, Mount Abu, where human sculpture is concerned, are splendid. Where design sculpture is concerned, it is on a high level everywhere. Rather than say more, we shall refer the reader to some of the illustrations given.

The shrines at Prambanam (Java), shows yet another phase and illustrates episodes from *Ramayana*. To describe these reliefs would take up too much room. As regards their merits, as well as the merit of all these temples reliefs, we shall give only one quotation for the rest the reader may judge for himself.[1]

Dr. Grouemal,[2] says of some of the Prambanam sculptures, and it can as truly be said of other reliefs in Aryavarta proper, that they approach near to Greek Art in Truth and Beauty, Sir James Raffles says of them—

> "In the whole course of my life, I have never met with such stupendous and finished specimens of human labour, and of the science and taste of ages long forgotten, crowded together in so small a compass as in this little spot."

This completes our brief and inadequate survey of Indian sculpture, which covers such a huge field that selection is very difficult. We have tried, as far as possible, to be guided by our need and selected only those specimens that reflect clearly the ideals of the times and are recognised by authorities to be works of merit. Of some of these we have not been able to get the reproductions and that has added to the difficulty of the task. But we have done our best to overcome all these difficulties, and the conclusions we have come to are, that, the plastic Art indeed was very well patronised, and therefore excelled. It seems to have a continuous history of ascendancy, right from the days of Asoka to about the 12th Century. The first flowering was simple yet natural and realistic, in spirit truly a rustic Art, untouched by the borrowed sophisticated Art of Asoka's Court.

How this Art changed into the refined yet restrained exuberance of the Gupta days, we have traced; and with this development Indian Art seems to have soared its highest. There it remained dur-

[1] For the illustrations refer to Havel's *Indian Sculpture and Painting Plates*, pp. 39, 40, 41 and 42.

[2] Havel: *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 135.

ing the whole of the classical period that followed, at the end of which decline sets in. In the monuments of this age the search for Reality behind Maya, and the realisation of the Unity of all existence and creation is amply brought out. The workmanship and technique are so effective especially when we take the granite and the hard rock surfaces into consideration, that to look at some of the specimens is to hear them speak, so overflowing are they with the message of love and service which inspired the whole beings of the artists who created them.



SECTION III. Painting in Ancient India.

That painting was an Art very popular in Ancient India is well known, but of its remains, we have well nigh nothing, as Coomaraswamy says, not even a thousandth part of what there must have been. The usual causes—the destructive forces of nature, and the ravages of Muslim fanaticism—are mainly responsible for this lack.

Besides this, with the coming of Mahayana Buddhism and the *Bhakti Marga*, and because of the use of permanent material from the days of Asoka, sculpture became the fashion of the day. Each artist and craftsman, sought to give his worship as permanent a form as possible. Sometimes painting was combined with sculpture reliefs as at Amaravati, Ellora, and in that form it may have continued, but at the same time, fresco painting must have suffered.

Again, while sculpture was mostly in the hands of professionals, painting, as we shall show, was a general accomplishment of all who claimed to be cultured, almost as much as modern ball-room dancing is regarded to be in the West. Being such a favourite with amateurs, painting of a secular character must have been greatly in vogue, and

that may have been an added cause of the lesser favour it received while Buddhism was in ascendancy.

A very flourishing school of secular painting was in existence, cultivated as a diversion and a source of instruction by the cultured bourgeoisie, is evidenced by the references in the literature of the day.[1] Not only was it favoured by the bourgeoisie, but Kings, lords, princes and princesses, all practised the Art, especially in the form of portraiture. An integral part of every palace as well as a nobleman's manor was a *Chitra-Shala* and a whole establishment of artists attached to it. In the section on *Women in Ancient India* we have already cited a number of literary references to support this. At these establishments dwelt the craftsmen and workers, under royal patronage, whose sole business was to cultivate their Art. But no remains even of one such private *chitra-shala*, are in existence.

The only paintings existing, hailing from this age are accordingly, religious in theme ; and are to be found on the walls of Ajanta, and Bagh. The later discoveries at Sittannavasal in the Pallava Kingdom of the South is an addition, and Sigiriya (5th Century)[2] in Ceylon completes the list of the chief examples. Some fragments are also traceable in the caves at Ellora and Orissa. Some writers classify the Art of Sigiriya as secular, because the subject matter is not easily discernible. But to us it appears that the ladies in these paintings appear to be carrying offerings, therefore very probably it must be religious in theme.

Huein Tsang who came to India as a pilgrim in the 7th Century tells us, that, at Gandhara a long while before his day, King Kanishka had employed artists from Bactria to paint the King's palace, and such other articles as he desired. The convent of 'Serikha' was the finest example of this Art in that Kingdom.[3] This is the only historical reference we have to secular painting.

Literary references to painting and picture galleries are numerous in the *Epics*,[4] the *Jatakas*,[5] and the dramatic [6] literature of the age. In the *Ramayana* there is a description of Ravana's *chitra-sala* in Ceylon. In Bhavabhuti's famous play *Uttara-Rama-Charitra*, we have a whole scene laid in the *chitra-sala*, where are depicted in paint the incidents of the *Ramayana*. The scene is very

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[1] N. C. Mehta: *Indian Painting*, p. 25.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 88.
[3] Havel: *Indian Sculpture and Painting*, p. 155.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 153-54.
[6] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, pp. 81-82.

effectively worked out, full of tender pathos, and shows how much the Art of painting aided the embellishment of the palace. The effect of these paintings is touchingly described, and so realistic are they, that Sita very often mistakes them for actual occurrences.

Another interesting reference to this Art is given by R. C. Dutt.[1] Jimutavahana, the King of Vidyadharas fell in love with the Princess Malayavati, whose portrait he saw painted in a book containing pictures of the most beautiful women, presented to him by a court artist. Later he saw in flesh and blood the object of his devotion at worship one day, and his passion was further intensified. His love almost drove him insane. In order to distract and console himself, he sat down to make a picture of his beloved. The young lady, who had heard of this, hid behind the bushes to watch the royal artist at work. The artist King was not as skilful as he might have been, with the result that the portrait he drew was so unlike the original, that the princess thinking it to be the portrait of a rival, fainted.

King Agnimitra of Kalidasa's drama is first attracted to Malvika through her portrait hung up in the *chitra-sala* by the Queen's orders.

King Dushyanta of *Shakuntala* fame likewise consoles himself with the portrait of his beloved drawn by himself, or perhaps by a court lady.

In the *Megha-Duta*, there are references to this mode of amusement and distraction for the lover while the beloved is absent.

These references show how popular and well-patronised the Art of painting was, especially in the secular form in those days, despite the fact that no actual remains have come to us. From the technique at Ajanta, and the high level of the contemporary sculpture and other forms of art, we may conclude that the Art of secular painting must have been as highly developed as the other arts of the period.

We will now turn to the still surviving remains of the religious Art which still exist. The main centres we have named are Ajanta, Bagh, Sigiriya and Sittannavasal.

The Art of the Ajanta cave-paintings or frescoes, extends right from 200 B. C. to 700 A. D. and hence many various styles are represented there. Yet, one remark may be made which is true of all the best work there. The same delicacy of expression, the same intensity of devotion, tenderness, and love of nature, which are so

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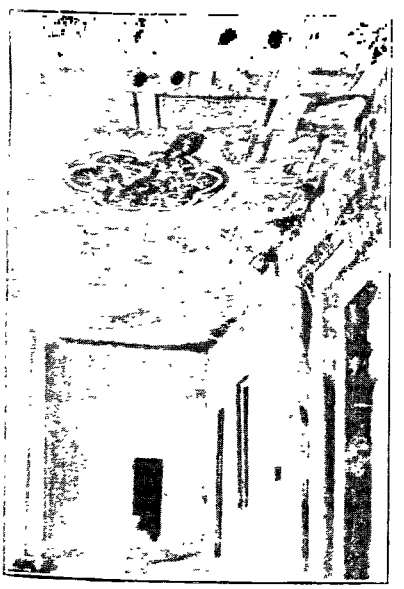
[1] *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, Vol. III, p. 408.

PLATE XLIII.

FRESCOES FROM AJANTA



(a) A group showing men, women, animals and foliage, blended in a whole. (The six-tusked Elephant Jataka.)



(b)



(c)

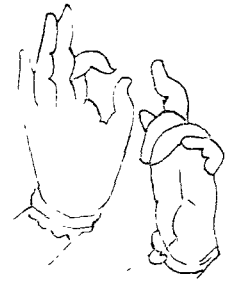


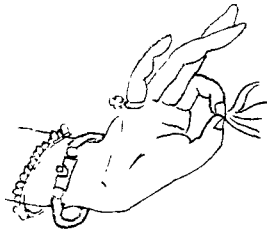
(d) A group of musicians, with various musical instruments.

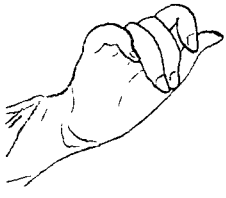
(*By courtesy Sir Akbar Hydari and the Archaeological Department of Hyderabad.*)

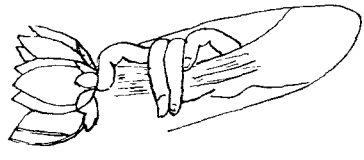


(a) Bagh Frescoe (*By courtesy A. Dept. of Gr...*

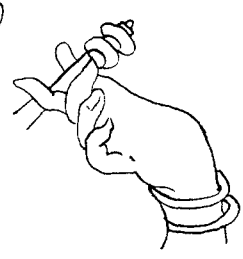














(b) 'Hands' from Ajanta and Bagh

striking in stone in the Gupta Sculpture and at Borobudur, are transformed here in colours.

In the earlier Caves we have the same spirit of the joy of life[1] untouched by the thought of misery, naive, simple, yet alluring, that we see at Sanchi in sculpture. But in the later frescoes contemporary with the Gupta[2] and the classical age, we see a different spirit altogether. In spite of the splendour and gaity of the life represented, there is an expression of wistfulness on each face, which, if given sound, would speak, "Beautiful as this is, it is futile as all life is, and the sooner we get away from it the better".[3] The head of the Bodhisatva (frontispiece) seems to say this more emphatically than any other frescoe. Many other principal figures also say so; but the minor figures all seem to be revelling in the joy of life. Very probably, they were not so touched by Buddhism as the principal characters were. In them the Brahmanic joy of life still seems to be fully awake.

Is this distinction conscious, or merely a reading back into history? is a question each spectator must answer for himself. Men, nature, supermen, and the heavenly beings, all seem to form a complete unity and equality, so sympathetically and in such perfect unison of spirit are all the compositions rendered.[4] Each particular figure is worked with obvious care and tenderness.[5] However wide the expanse and varied the composition,[6] every figure included, whether of man or animal, has its particular incident to relate, de-

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[1] Cp. following from Sir L. Binyon.

"The men painted Indian life as they saw it; and though we feel the glow of a religious impulse behind the creation, we are above all impressed with their intuitive discovery of the beauty in natural movement, unstudied attitude and spontaneous grace... The fresh vigour the exhuberance of life which contains with all its joyousness the capacity for deep melancholy and compassion, is the dominant impression left on one by Lady Harringham's beautiful copies.

[2] Cave XVI, XVII, XIX, XX.

[3] Cave XVII—Mother and Child—from Six-tusked elephant Jataka.

[4] Lady Harringham: *Ajanta*, p. 20.

[5] "The siege of Ceylon is," says Dorothy Archer—one of the workers who accompanied Lady Harringham—"a noble conception and contains separate groups which in themselves are gems. The splendid elephants swaying through the archway ready for battle, the fighting with spears, the flying arrows, the terrible demons, the exquisite group of dancing girls, and the musicians above, and the anointing of the King—all these are united into one marvellous whole. The line in this picture has an assurance and delicacy, even surpassing those of other pictures at Ajanta".

[6] Siege of Ceylon, specially the groups of dancers.

scribed as vividly and lovingly as the main theme, yet so well balanced that neither lose by this exactitude in execution. This is in striking contrast to the Moghul paintings of the later days, wherein except the principal figures, the rest seem stereotyped in appearance as well as gesture.[1]

To speak about the marvellous technique and the complete control of the brush and lines in ancient Indian painting is not our task, as it can be and has been very fittingly described[2] by Art critics who understand the process. But the variety of poses, their simplicity and ease, combined with grace and dignity, strike the eye of any layman[3] even. There is the most consummate Art in every line and stroke expressing movement. The hands are perhaps the most expressive ever portrayed in any Art in the world.

The frescoes at Bagh and Sigiriya are exactly in the same style and founded on the same inspiration. Some of the best fragments are given opposite. The 'music party' from Bagh, where the women are engaged in a dance, is a masterpiece by itself.

> "The entire scene is one of extraordinary beauty and singular merit, even among the great masterpieces of Ajanta and Bagh. About a dozen women are engaged in a dance, and so exquisite is the rhythm of it that even the Arhats, and Apsaras are seen descending from the heavens to witness it. In the eloquent words of Griffiths "the supple wrists, palms and fingers of these beautiful women beseech, explain, deprecate and caress."[4]

The pictures opposite will show how true the remark is, for hands were a department in which the Indians of the olden days excelled, unsurpassed by any other Art in the whole world.

The next main group is that from Sittannavasal, first noticed by T. A. Gopinath Row, and further studied by his friend Prof. Dubreuil from Pondicherry. They are dated 600-625 A. D., and assigned to the reign of the Pallava ruler Mahendravarman I. The two southern kingdoms of the Pallavas and Chalukyas were famous for their patronage of Art and culture. This particular monarch

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[1] Any Moghul Court Scene, such as the *Embassy* of Sir T. Roe, or *Court Scene of Shah Jehan.*

[2] Griffith's *Ajanta*, Ch. I, p. 7. Yazdani's *Ajanta.* Lady Harringham's *Ajanta*, pp. 18-20.

[3] Lady Harringham: *Ajanta*, p. 18.
"The artist had a complete command of posture. The seated and floating poses especially are of great interest. The knowledge of the types and position gestures and beauties of hands is amazing."—Also compare—Griffith's *Ajanta*, p. 7.

[4] N. C. Mehta: *Indian Painting*, p. 13.

SITTANNAVASAL



THE TANK

(By courtesy Archaeological Department Pudukkottai State.)

PLATE XLV

SITTANNAVAS



The apsaras that the pillars at the temple of Sittannavasa



(By courtesy Archaeological Department Pudukkottai State.

of the Pallavas seems to outclass all in his patronage of the fine arts. Not only was he a patron himself, like his contemporary Shri Harsha, but, according to Dubreuil, it was he who first conceived the idea of spreading in the Tamil country the mode of cutting temples in rocks. *Vichitra Chhita* "one with the curious mind" was the pen-name he had chosen for himself. Another epithet he bore was that of *Chitrakar-puli*—the tiger amongst painters.[1] His mind and talent seems to have been very versatile. Besides painting and architecture. he seems to have given his attention to music and drama too, for we are told he had written a treatise on dancing and music, as well as a burlesque called after his epithet *Mattavavilasa prahasana*.[2]

The Sittannavasal cave is a Jaina temple, which had all its walls and ceiling covered with frescoes. But of these only the ceiling and pillars are left. The main fresco represents a tank covered with lotus. Amongst the lotus are found fishes, geese, buffaloes, elephants and three men with a lotus each in their hands. Their pose, their colouring, and the sweetness of their countenance, are, indeed, charming.

The decoration of the capitals of the pillars consist of painted lotuses whose stems inter-twine most elegantly. The pillars themselves are adorned with figures of dancing girls. Dubreuil thinks the frescoes represented are of Jain theology; but N. C. Mehta surveying the religious history of the times, shows that they are Shaivite, and of the same inspiration as the famous bronze Nataraj. The figures represented are those of the Shiva or Mahadeva, the *Gandharvas* and *Apsaras*, the heavenly damsels

> "whose supple movements have been seized and rendered with the ease and sureness born of the closest observation and aesthetic insight".[3]

It was left to the artist of Southern India to crystallise into movement, as seen respectively in the glorious figures of swaying immortal form the rhythm of the dance and the energy of dynamic *Apsaras*,

> "loaded with jewelled ornaments, broad hipped, narrow waisted, powerful and graceful as panthers and in the noble conception of Shiva as Nataraj the Divine Dancer."[4]

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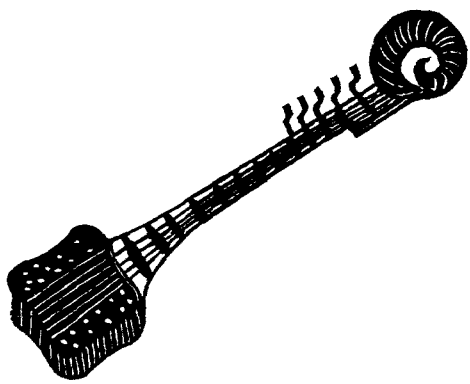
[1] N. C. Mehta: *Indian Painting*, p. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 21.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

These Apsaras are about the most effectively refined things one ever set one's eyes on. Absorbed in the rhythm of their dance,

> "The eyes the fingers bear the unmistakable stamp of the subtle vocabulary of expressive gesture and finger poses which the old masters used with such power and unceasing insight."[1]

With this expression, the Art of painting seems to have come to a halt in India. Except for the 'secular' paintings from Gujarat just discovered, which are comparatively of a low standard (12-15 Century), there is no evidence of this Art till its renaissance under Akbar and his successors. Yet with the Moghuls it burst forth with the double vigour of a new life. How deep must have been the grasp of the technique and inspiration to develop so quickly at so slight an impetus! At Akbar's Court, the best painter Abul Fazal[2] tells us, was Daswant, a Hindu who even surpassed his master, and whose talent was the talk of the whole court. Such talent is not the work of one generation. It is only when there are generations of inherited culture that such talent can arise.

It is to the institutions of India, that we owe the preservation of the nation's Art and technique even in times of the greatest decline, as the medieval period was for painting.



SECTION IV. Music and Dancing.

Music and dancing are about the oldest known arts in India. From a study of primitive conditions, it is found often that, the dance existed before music, accompanied by mere clapping of hands.[3] What was the order in case of India we hardly know,

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[2] Ain-i-Akbari.
[3] Hambly: p. 3.

because, as usual, we have no evidence of a reliable historical character ; instead myths and legends abound, about the beginnings of these arts. Brahma himself by his active power Saraswati, the Goddess of Speech, and their mythological son Narada, invented the *Vina*.[1] and gave mortals music.

Another legend ascribes the origin of these arts of music, dancing and drama combined, to the Great God Shiva, or Rudra, who, at the request of Brahma invented this new form of amusement called the *Natya*, and communicated it to Bharata, who expounded it to the world in his treatise on the *Natya Shastra*.[2]

The historical origin, as far as the Aryans are concerned, may be traced to the Vedic age. The Rig-Vedic hymns had to be chanted. For this chanting three tones were used. The Vedic Index also gives us the information about a great variety of string, wind, and percussion instruments, which were in use in primitive times.[3] Music, therefore, was in existence in Vedic times. Later, with the *Sama Veda* and the *Gandharva Veda*, we have certain evidence of its existence.

During the Epic age, music and dancing became accomplishments cultivated by the aristocracy, and from that time these arts progressed rapidly. With the rise of Buddhism and Jainism, they were divorced from the religious fold, and were cultivated only as secular arts. But, with the Guptas, especially with Samudragupta of the Vina fame, they were once more raised to their lofty seat. They remained thus honoured and elevated with the whole Gupta Dynasty, which saw their zenith.

From those days, music and dancing continue in India to this very day. Various important innovations have taken place. The Mahomedans greatly varied the style ; yet, says Dr. Coomaraswamy, especially of music :

> "the Art of music of the present day is a direct descendant of these ancient schools, whose traditions have been handed down, with comments and expansion in the guild of the hereditary musicians. As in other arts, and in life, so here also, India presents to us the wonderful spectacle of the still surviving consciousness of the world."

By outlining the main features of modern Indian music, therefore, we shall be able to judge what was the state of the Art during the period dealt with here. This, though not the best, is the only method

[1] Jones: *Musical Modes of the Hindoos*—from Rosenthal's *Indian Music*, p. 176.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Modes of Gesture*, p. 2.
[3] Rosenthal, p. 2.

that can aid us, for none of the really authoritative and original works on Indian music are translated.

We shall first discuss the nature and purpose of Indian music; next consider how this purpose reflects the ideals of life already discussed, and later observe how these views are embodied in the various musical modes.

Nature and Purpose.

Indian music—

> "is essentially impersonal: it reflects an emotion and an experience, which are deeper and wider and older than the emotion or wisdom of any single individual. Its sorrow is without tears, its joy without exultation, and it is passionate without any loss of serenity. It is in the deepest sense of the word all human."

Indian Art, and music especially, does not deal with individual, transient, emotions. This characteristic strikes all who are able to understand and appreciate it. In it, one hardly meets the joys and sorrows of an individual's life, expressed so effectively in Western music, for example. Like all Indian Art, music never aimed at giving the struggle of individual emotions or their intensity. The purpose of Art,—not conscious of course,—was to establish the identity of intuition and expression.[1] Life was a search for hidden Realities; and so was Art, particularly music. What the musician did was, that he penetrated behind this veil of Mava, by his music, and with him took his listeners. This is the Indian theory of inspiration: Reality is there, what the musician does is, he hears it:

> "It is then Sarasvati, the goddess of speech and learning, or Narada, whose mission it was to disseminate occult knowledge in the sound of the strings of his Vina; or Krishna whose flute is for ever calling us to leave the duties of the world and follow him—it is these, rather than any human individual, who speak through the singer's voice, and are seen in the movements of the dancer."[2]

It is the inner reality of things, rather than any transient or partial experience, that the singer voices, and the dancer's steps or gestures work out. Those who sing here, says Sankaracharya, sing God; and the Vishnu Purana adds "all songs are a part of Him, who wears a form of sound."[3]

Another important purpose of Indian Art is that it establishes the unity of all existence, the harmony of Spirit and Matter. It brings

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[1] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 79.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

humanity in tune with the infinite. It is not the purpose of the song to repeat the confusion of life, but to express and arouse particular passions of the body and soul, in man and nature, to prove their ultimate oneness.

The end of life or existence was *Moksha* or *Nirvana*. Now, what guarantee had one that this reward at the end of a life of complete surrender and austerities was worth the sacrifice? The Indian theory of Aesthetics declares that in the ecstacies of love and Art, we already receive an intimation of that redemption.[1] In other words, we are assured by the experience of aesthetic contemplation that Paradise is a reality.[2] And which Art can make us feel this serenity, and harmony with the universe, better than music? Music has the power to reach straight to the soul of the listener, evading reason, which is an enemy of intuitive knowledge.[3]

Inspired with these ideals, the ancient Indians evolved concrete modes of expression, which helped immensely to realise them. Let us see what these are.

The basis of Indian music is the note, the elemental sound, whose combination in ascending order according to the region of the body, from the navel to the lips, forms the fundamental gamut

Constituents of Music.

The chief scale of Indian music consists of twenty-two notes, forming a sum total of all the notes used in all the songs. But this is a basic scale and never as a whole in its chromatic form used in singing. The scale used for singing consists of seven notes, similar to the C major scale. The main notes forming a gamut are now-a-days called *Sargama*, and were in their origin associated with the cries of animals and birds serving as concrete tests for the accuracy of their reproduction They are classified as follows :—*Shadga* (Sa), the cry of the peacock—*Rishaba* (Ri), the sound made by the cow calling her calf ; *Gandhara* (Ga), the bleat of the goat ; *Madhyama* (Ma), the cry of the heron, and the tonic of nature ; *Panchama* (Pa), the note of the Cuckoo, or Kokila, the Indian Nightingale ; *Dhaivata* or (Dha), the neighing of the horse ; *Nishada* (Ni), the trumpeting of an elephant.[4] Each of these notes again, has particular places in body, such as the throat, chest and lips from which they

[1] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 80.

[2] *Ibid.*, p.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 81. "The singer is a magician, and the song is a ritual, a sacred ceremony, an ordeal which is designed to set at rest that wheel of imagination and the senses which alone hinder us from contact with the reality".

[4] Rothenstal: *Indian Music*, p. 6.

are produced. Sa, is produced from the navel ; Ri, from the chest ; Ga, from the throat, Ma, from the palate, Pa, from the nose, Dha, from the teeth ; Ni, from the lips.[1] So that each note has its appointed place, and sounds best when so produced.

The Rag. From the combinations of these seven notes come what are called the *Ragas* in Indian music. Five, six or seven, any number of notes are taken in appropriate combination and thus a *raga* is formed. One can imagine the number of combinations and permutations that may be possible to form different *ragas* ; but the majority of the systems recognise 36 *ragas*, or main themes derived from the six principal *thats*, in the language of allegory represented as 6 *ragas* with their five wives each, called *raginis*,—making the total of 36. In some of the ancient works quite as many as 400 *ragas and raginis* and their offsprings are mentioned.

The *raga* is the essential and basic mode in Indian music. Every Indian song or piece is set in a particular *raga* or *ragini*, the latter being the feminine of *raga*, and indicating an abridgement or modification of the main theme. A *raga*, is a melody mould or the ground plan of a song.[2] In it are embodied the mood of the song, the number of notes to be used. the particular mode of going up and coming down the scale, and the main notes namely the *vadi*, and the *sam-vadi*. Before the singer sings the song, he rambles round this ground plan to give the listeners an idea of the main *raga*. Then, he commences the song in a particular *Tala* or time, which in art-music is seldom long. Later, he commences to improvise on the main theme, within the compass of the *raga*, and the rhythm and time provided by the *tala*. This form of improvisation is spoken of as *alap* when it is slow and *tan* when it is fast. In these extensions (*alaps*) for the sake of embellishment, grace notes and glissandes (*meand*) are constantly used. The whole song is accompanied by the drone of the *tambura*, which supplies the background.

Psychologically, the word *raga*, meaning colouring or passion, suggests to Indian ears the idea of mood. The purpose of a song is to express and arouse a particular unison of passions of body and soul in man and nature. Each *raga* is associated with an hour of the day or night when it may be appropriately sung, and some are associated with particular seasons, and are said to have definite magical effects. So potent is considered a *raga* when it is sung at the proper time and season, that legends tell us of a singer having

[1] Shah: *Splendour that was 'Ind*—Section on Music and Dancing, p. 117.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 74.

burnt himself in spite of being in the midst of a river when he sang *Dipak Raga*, at the command of Akbar. A dancing girl is said to have caused rain to come by singing the *Megha Raga*, thus saving a country from the famine threatening it.[1]

Origin of Raga. The origin of the *ragas* are various. Some like *Pahari*, are derived from local folk songs; others, like *Jog*, from the song of wandering ascetics; still others are the creations of great musicians by whose names they are known.[2] Then there are the season *ragas*, such as *Vasanta*, which are derived by appropriating a different mode to each of the different seasons.

> "The artists of India connected certain strains with certain ideas, and were able to recall the memory of autumnal merriment, at the close of the harvest, or of separation, and melancholy during the cold months; of reviving hilarity on the appearance of blossoms, and complete vernal delight in the month of Madhu or honey; of langour during the dry heat and of refreshment by the first rains, which cause in this climate a record spring."[3]

Tala. *Tala*, or timing, is another important feature of Indian music. The Indian rhythms are founded on long and short durations, and not on stress; nor is the beginning of a bar marked by an accent. The fixed unit in timing is a 'section', consisting of groups of bars not necessarily alike. The rhythm is counted in sums of two or three.[4] At times the counting is very elaborate and complicated. The time is kept by means of a pair of drums on which a *tabalchi*, drums the time and the singer keeps to that.

One other instrument is sufficient to make the song complete and that is the *tambura*. For Indian music is purely a melodic Art, and is devoid of any harmonised accompaniment other than the drone of the *tambura*. The pure melody is sung by the singer against the resonance of this 'drone' of the *tambura* which consists of 4 strings, vibrating the two essential key notes Sa and Pa. It aids the singer to keep in perfect pitch, and lends that sonorous vibrating effect, without which the song seems hardly complete.

Bhava. The main themes of Indian songs are human or divine love in all its aspects, or the direct praise of God. The words are always sincere and passionate, and mostly brief. For words are not so essential to the Indian Art song proper. It is the way the artist interprets the *bhava* of the *raga* either with his voice, or with

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[1] Rothenstal: *Indian Music*, p. 11.
[2] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 74.
[3] Jones: *Musical modes of the Hindoos*, p. 17.
[4] Adapted from *Dance of Siva*, p. 77.

his gestures if it be dance that is of importance. At times meaningless end syllables are used to finish an *alap*. But as far as the meaning of the music is concerned, they are effective because they end the 'alap' and attach it to the main rhythm and mood of the *raga*.

> "The more essentially the singer is a musician, however, the more the words are regarded merely as the vehicle of music. In the art song, the words are always brief, voicing a mood, rather than telling any story, and they are used to support the music with little regard to their own logic."[1]

These are briefly the main modes of Indian music. From these Dr Coomaraswamy deduces a metaphysical interpretation, which identifies this Art so completely with natural phenomenon, and illustrates the Unity of existence so well, that the temptations cannot be resisted of incorporating the whole passage here.

> "In all art, there are monumental and articulate elements, masculine and feminine factors, which are unified in perfect form. We have here the sound of the tambura which is heard before the song, during the song, and continues after it: That is the Timeless Absolute, which is as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. On the other hand there is the song itself, which is the variety of nature, emerging from its source and returning at the close of its cycle. The harmony of that undivided Ground, with this intricate Pattern is the unity of Spirit and Matter."[2]

The Vina. Besides vocal music there was also instrumental music in India. The best known instrument is the Vina. There are pictured at Ajanta, other instruments too, but hardly any of them appears to be of a solo character.[3] It is the Vina that is the characteristic instrument of the nation. Invented in the remote past by the sage Narada, it has from that day to our day, been the most popular and most expressive instrument invented by a people's genius It is a very difficult instrument to play, and proverb holds that a man who masters the Vina can afterwards play any other instrument without effort.

It is said to be the nearest instrument in kinship to the human voice, and reflects almost all the shades and variations that the human voice can give. It is thus able to sweep one off one's feet, just as a well trained *ustad* with a mellow voice can with the rhythm of his song. In fact sometimes much more, because the tone

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[1] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 78.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 80.
[3] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 78.

is always pure, while the voice of an Indian singer, though sometimes of intrinsic beauty, is more often than not, harsh, overstrained, toneless and sometimes even cracked. This brings us to the important question of voice production.

Voice Production.

That there was such a science in the olden day is known, and very probably were all the materials available, we would still be able to work out the principles on which the science was based and practised. One point at least is certain that whatever was, is no more, and we very often have to content ourselves with the rather pathetic spectacle of a brilliant singer struggling to express himself by means of a ruined instrument, i.e. a bad voice. Despite the lack of voice culture, one must confess a singer sometimes creates beauty and music of a wonderful character by which the whole audience is thrilled. Whilst on the wings of such rapturous melody, the atmosphere is entirely broken by occasional harsh notes and guttural discords, that transport one back to reality from an entrancing vision, with a rude start. How beautiful the whole would be without these flaws, one cannot help but say to oneself! Why should these flaws be there?

Dr. Coomaraswamy tells us, and rightly too that the Indian audience is not too particular about the voice. It is the song that matters, and if that is rendered well, it is able to correct and harmonise the rest of the effect by means of its imagination. So much to the credit of the Indian audience and its cultural level and taste. But that is no reason or excuse why the singer should come for his task unprepared.

No self respecting Vina or Sharod player ever dreams of performing on a cracked or disfigured instrument. Even before a singer starts to sing, he is meticulously careful that the *Tambura*, *Sarangis* and *Tablas* are in perfect pitch and resonance. Why should he be so very careless about the most important part of his performance his own voice, and why is that the worst prepared, which should out of these receive the most attention? The voice is surely far more important than the *Tambura* or *Sarangi* to the whole song.

Though not the most important element in singing, the voice is after all the vehicle through which the singer expresses himself, and hence he ought to have it in perfect order. Order does not mean correct rendering for that the Indian singer does to perfection ; but tone he never swerves from the pitch even for a moment, for to sing *besur* is a fault Indian music can never tolerate. The day it learns to

give the other aspect of the same whole, the tone, as much attention, *Sanghita* will indeed be an Art very near to perfection.

It is to this end that quite a good part of our efforts in the future should be directed If we have lost our old science it is a sad case no doubt ; but the way out is not to reconcile ourself to the lost, but to stir ourselves to find a solution. Civilisation is sufficiently advanced and science fully progressed to aid us. The West has a very scientific method of voice production, which though greatly unsuited to Indian requirements, may be improved upon and adapted by any sufficiently intelligent and enterprising student who studies both, and of course makes it his life work.

This is rather an unusual ending to a section on music as an Art form in Ancient India. But as we have attempted to explain the ideals of the past from the present, a few words on the present condition, and, how the future would benefit from the past—without this aim the study of the past is futile—should not be amiss.

Dancing. The sister art of Dancing was as popular as that of music, and practically inseparable. Ritualistic dances must have been known and performed in the past, about the same time that the sages of the *Vedas* recited their *mantras* round about the sacrificial altar. At the Mahavrata[1] ceremony, maidens danced round the fire with water-pitchers, while the *stotra* was being performed. They poured water on the fire, as an act of sympathetic magic, intended to produce rain. At the close of the Horse Sacrifice, girls dance round the Mayaliya fire with water pots on their heads, beating the round with their feet and singing. "This is honey". It was, perhaps from these beginnings, later strongly influenced by the Dravid elements, that the dance in India developed. During the Buddhist and the Classic age, in spite of Buddha's injunction against the dancer, both the sculptures as well as the paintings bear witness to the popularity of the Art. It was used as a form of worship, as so many of the Bharhut and Amaravati sculptors portray. Its civic function was to adorn the court, and honour a guest. But it was really in Indra's Paradise that the dance proper, of which the earthly dance was a poor imitation, was indispensable. The *Gandharvas* and *Apsaras* in Kailasa[2] played the instruments, sang, danced, and acted to amuse the celestial beings, taught by the Great God 'Shiva', who

[1] *Encyclopaedia Brittannica*, 14th Edition, Dance, p. 20.

[2] Dancers are scattered on the reliefs of Bharhut and Sanchi, and on the painted walls of Ajanta and at Amaravati. Dance seems to have been accepted as a ritual or form of worship, judging from the devotion expressed on the face of the dancers.

PLATE XLVII.

THE DANCE IN SCULPTURE

SHIVA







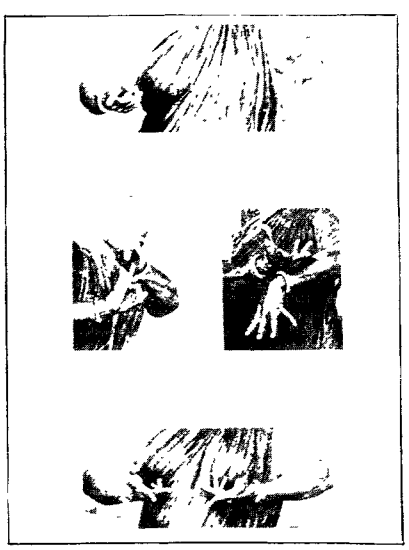














GESTURE
IN INDIAN
DANCING

(By courtesy A. K. Coomaraswamy.)

himself danced to express his joy or indignation, with almost the whole pantheon acting as his chorus, enraptured with the rhythm of the Divine Dancer, the Creator of the Art of Dance.[1]

Shiva is one of the main figures, as far as Indian dancing is concerned; and his most popular name is that of Nataraj, the Lord of the Dance. He performs many dances, and no doubt the root idea behind all these dances is more or less the same, namely the manifestation of the primeval rhythm energy. He is represented in various dances, at Ellora, Elephanta, and in the bronzes of South India, some of which are superb expressions of the rhythm of the Dance.

It appears, in historical times at least, that South India was more the home of the Dance than Aryavarta. In Aryavarta, dancing represented in sculpture at Bharhut, Sanchi, and Amaravati.[2] At Borobudur there is sculptured a skilled dancer exhibiting before the King. The frescoes at Ajanta abound in groups of earthly dancers as well as the heavenly *apsaras*, the most famous of these groups being the ones in the fresco representing the seige of Ceylon and the dance party. But none of these in themselves embody the essence, the spirit of rhythm, as do the famous Nataraj bronzes of South India, or the frescoes of the Pallava Kingdom at Sittannavasal.[3]

Shiva's dance was present, says Coomaraswamy, in the minds of those who first danced in frantic, and perhaps intoxicated energy, in honour of the pre-Aryan hill gods, afterwards merged in Shiva.[4]

From the various dances of Shiva, three are important, of which two are embodied in sculpture. The first is an evening dance performed by the Great God, on the snowy summit of Mount Kailasa—

> "Placing the mother of the three worlds upon a golden throne, studded with precious gems, Sulapani dances on the heights of Kailasa, and all the Gods gather around Him. Saraswati plays on the Vina, Indra on the flute, Brahma holds the time-marking cymbols, Lakshmi begins a song, Vishnu plays on the drum, and all the gods stand round about. Gandharvas, Yakshas, Patagas, Uragas, Siddhas, Sadhyas,

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[1] Cp. Illustration opp.

[2] Cp. Illustrations opp.

[3] "It was left to the artists of Southern India to crystallize into immortal form, the rhythm of the dance and the energy of dynamic movement, as seen respectively in the glorious figures of swaying Apsaras (Pallava) loaded with jewelled ornaments, broad hipped narrow waisted powerful and graceful as panthers, and in the noble conception of Shiva as Nataraj the Divine Dancer." N. C. Mehta: *Indian Painting*, p. 12.

[4] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 57.

> Vidyadharas, Amaras, Apsaras, and all the beings dwelling in the three worlds, assembled there to witness the celestial dance, and hear the music of the divine choir at the hour of twilight." [1]

Tandava, representing his tamasic aspect as Bhairava, sculptured both at Ellora and Elephanta, is another of his favourite dances.[2] It is performed in cemeteries and burning grounds,[3] where Shiva, usually in his ten-armed form, dances wildly with Devi, accompanied by a troop of capering imps. To this dance also is given a pre-Aryan origin, which in the ancient days was performed by a deity, half god and half demon, holding his midnight revels in the sombre surrounding of a crematorium. When associated with Shiva, or his Devi in the tamasic form of Kali, in *Saiva* and *Sakti* literature, this dance takes on a most profound implication.[4]

His last dance, the most important from the point of view of Indian Art, is the famous *Nadanta* performed in Tillai's Court, which is the subject matter of the *motif* of Nataraj, on which so many South Indian bronzes are based. The most apt and beautiful rendering of this *motif* is the Nataraj of Madras Museum, and after that comes the famous statue at Tanjore.

The mythology behind this dance is important, in order to understand the significance of the various accessories and activities signified by the four armed form. A group of heretical rishis were performing austerities in the forest of Taragam, in order to destroy Shiva. The Great God heard of this, and went there to confront them. On recognising him the rishies, by means of their incantations, raised a fierce beast in the form of a tiger, who wildly attacked Shiva. With a smile on his lips, Shiva lifted the animal off the ground, and with the nail of his little finger stripped off its skin and triumphantly cast it round his neck. The rishies sorely disappointed redoubled their efforts, and there arose a mighty serpent, who hissed past to attack the God. With equal sang-froid, Shiva, took the serpent, and wreathed it round his neck where it hung like a garland. The anger of the rishies knew no bounds. Making a final desperate effort, they produced a malignant dwarf *Mauyalka* who rushed upon Shiva. Upon him the Great God pressed the tip of his toe, and broke the creature's back, and there in triumph on *Mauyalka's* back he performed this dance of triumph, gods and rishies forming the audience. So marvellous was this exhibition that

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[1] *Ibid.*
[2] Cp. Illustration, pp.
[3] Coomaraswamy: *Dance of Siva*, p. 57.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Ati Seshan begged to be allowed to behold once more this mystic dance, and Shiva promised to perform it once again in sacred Tillai the centre of the Universe.

It is this dance that is represented in the *Nataraja Motif*. We behold a four-armed form, with one toe resting on the subdued dwarf, the other leg raised, to give perfect poise to the form. One of his right hands holds a drum ; the *mudra* of the other signifies hope. The left hands, of which one holds the fire and the other points to the dwarf, are each on the opposite sides. Round his body is wreathed the snake and the tiger skin. In either ear he wears a man and woman's ear-ring, to signify the dual nature of the complete being. His face wears an expression of intense rapture, and his matted locks seem to be whirling with the rhythm of the dance, in which is entwined the holy Ganges, and crowned with *Chandra* which completes the whole array.

The whole cosmic energy embodied in the five activities of Shiva are represented in this dance ; "Our lord is the dancer, who like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses his power in mind and matter and makes them dance in their turn."

> "Oh my Lord, thy hand holding the sacred drum has made and ordered the heavens and earths and other worlds and innumerable souls. Thy lifted hands protect both the conscious and unconscious order of thy creation. All these worlds are transformed by Thy hand bearing fire. Thy sacred foot planted on the ground, gives an abode to the tired soul struggling in the toils of causality. It is thy lifted foot that grants eternal bliss to those that approach Thee. These five actions are indeed Thy handiwork."[1]

In short the drum represents the creative activity, protection comes from the hand of hope : from fire proceeds destruction ; the raised leg gives release, and the remaining hand pointing to the foot, gives refuge to the soul.[2] This is the significance of the Divine dancer's dance. It is because of Him that life comes, and ebbs when he chooses.

> "In the night of Brahma, nature is inert, and cannot dance till Shiva wills it. He rises from his rapture and dancing sends through inert matter pulsing waves of awakening sound, and lo ! matter also dances, appearing as a glory round about him."[3]

These are heavenly dances ; the dance on earth is fashioned on these. When the followers of Shiva worship him in dance, or when

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[1] Coomaraswamy : *Dance of Siva*, pp. 59-60.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 60.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

the *deva-dasi* dances round the image of the God enshrined in the temple, it is this Divine dancer who is their inspiration, and with his created mode, they express their adoration which results in self-forgetfulness.

The next important figure in the art dance in India is Krishna, an incarnation of the God Vishnu. As a cowherd he frolics and sports with the milkmaids in Brindaban. With the exquisite music of his *bansari* he draws them away from their homes and occupation to dance with him in the green meadows. For Krishna is a divine lover as well as a divine dancer and musician, a God, who sports with the milkmaids who represent the souls of men. His flute makes them forget all else except their intense love for him. They dance with him in divine ecstacy ; they give their all to him willingly, without so much as a question or the hope of a reward. Thus should men love God, is the moral behind this frolic, as embodied in the famous *rasa mandala* or 'circle of passion', a dance which Krishna danced with the *gopis* on the shining banks of the moonlit Jamuna.

Krishna gives us two dances ; the first is the dance of triumph following the victory over Kaliya ;[1] the second dance is about the most favourite country dance in Brindaban and the localities round about. It is called the *rasa mandala* or the general dance that Krishna danced with the *gopis*, making each *gopi* believe that he was dancing with her alone, while he danced with everyone, so swift did he move, and so intoxicated were the *gopis* with the dance. These dances reveal an erotic meaning and are of the *lasya* type, performed by the *Apsaras* of Indra's paradise, and by the *Deva-dasis* and *Nachnis* on earth.[2]

These two, then, are the patron deities of the Dance There are other minor deities, such as Kali and Ganesh, associated with the dance, but they have left hardly any impress on the dance as a form of racial expression. The purpose and ideal of the Dance are the same as that of music, except that what one gives in sound the other gives in gesture, and these need not be repeated. Now let us see what forms Indian dancing took on earth. The word *natya* meaning acting and dancing both, carries the meaning of the modern term dance.[3]

Dancing in Ancient India meant "rhythmic shewing" or ges-

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[1] Coomaraswamy : *Mirror of Gestures*, pp. 8-9.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

PLATE XLIX.

THE DANCE IN ANCIENT INDIA



A folk dance resembling the "Ras" of Gujrat



KRISHNA

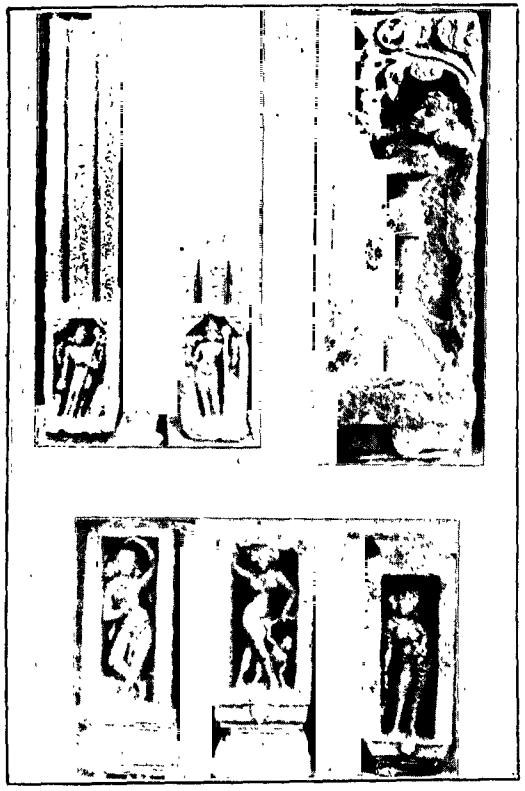




GESTURES

(By courtesy A. K. Coomaraswamy.)

PLATE L.



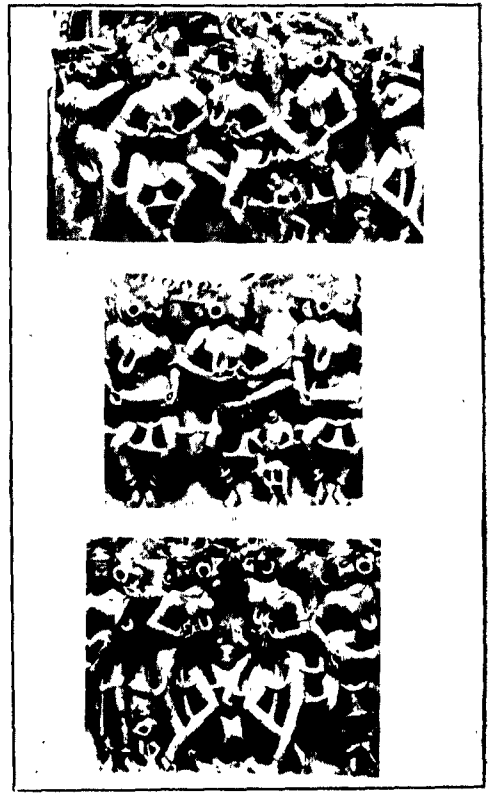
(a) Graceful dancers from Khiching

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.*)



(b) The Dance-Party Ajanta

(*By Courtesy Sir Akbar Hyder, and the Archaeological Department of Hyderabad.*)



(c) Dancers that adorn the ceiling of Mt. Abu

tures to music. *Natya* meant also the drama, for it combines music, dancing and acting all together. Bharata in his *Natya-shastra* deals mainly with the theory of the 'drama', of which dancing and music are constituent parts. Classic Indian Dancing is essentially an art of movement and gestures, in which the foot is no less important than the hand, the eye-brow no less significant than the poise of the neck, or the lines of the whole face. Space would not permit us to make even a bare mention of the 108 *karanas*, or the several *angaharas*, *rechakas* etc., in which the classic treatise writer has crystallised the technique of this Art. But this much may safely be added, that Indian classic dancing is an art with a clear purpose, in which every pose, every step, every gesture of the figure or the lips or the eyebrows has a definite significance, that no true artist can violate in his search for originality or self-expression. The art is never allowed to be a mere accomplishment. It taxes the artist more perhaps than any other Art, because he has to manifest his own personality within the almost cast iron frame work of the rules governing this art, as expounded by its classic and inspired progenitor. For it is through the means of this gesture language that the *rasa*, the essence of Art or beauty as we have explained is evoked in the spectator. The speculative mind of the ancient Indian sought to fuse all his being and activities with spirituality. The Dance therefore had a spiritual significance independent of its theme or charm for

> "By clearly expressing the flavour, and enabling men to taste thereof, it gives them the wisdom of Brahma, whereby they may understand how every business is unstable; from which springs indifference to such business, and therefrom, arise the highest virtues of peace and patience, and, hence again may be won the bliss of Brahma."[1]

How did the Art in practice embody all these ideals? and what forms did they take? It appears there were about three main dance forms in use. The first was *Nritta* or rhythmic movement without a theme. This was perhaps the most difficult and the best expression of the Dance as visualised by its creators. Within the compass of any particular *raga* and *tala* chosen by him, the dancer gives us his own interpretations of the *bhava* or mood of the *raga*. Just as a singer after he has given us the outlines of his song, illustrates the *raga* by means of variations on a particular theme in his own voice by means of *alaps*, *bilumpar*, *tan*, *meand* etc. so a dancer, when he is dancing a *nritta* expounds the various moods and phases of a parti-

[1] *Encyclopaedia Brittannica*—14th Edition, p. 20.

cular *raga* through his body and movements. To use Sanskrit phraseology the *rasa* and *bhava* of the *raga* are interpreted by the dancer's gestures. This form has no exponents left, or, if there are any stray artists who do perform the *nritta* they are very difficult to trace in a huge country like ours.

The *Nritya* comes next in the order of merit. Here certain abstractions or ideas, or even definite themes, are visualised, transformed into action, and related to the audience by means of the dancers movements and gestures. 'The down', 'the spring', 'the birth of Luxmi', 'the peacock', various episodes from the *Mahabharata*, 'Krishna's flute', etc. are some of the varied themes frequently used. This form when properly performed is a treat to watch. As the dancer glides before us, unfolding his message through every atom of his being,[1] his eyes, eyebrows, lips, expression, gesture and play of the finger, and movement generally, we are for the moment entranced, and in our imaginations transported away from ourselves into the realm of Rhythm and Beauty. This form of dance together with

> "the sister Art of music, must be regarded as representing the most perfect form of Indian practical culture now surviving."

—one of the most beautiful and moving of Arts.[2]

The *Nautch* is the third, and perhaps the most popular form of the dance now surviving. It sets forth a given theme by means of song and gestures combined. Its simplicity compared to the last two, which do not need the aid of a song or its words, is self-evident. Yet, it is an attractive and very enjoyable form when it is not stereotyped and entirely formalised. At the moment it exists in a very decadent form, in the hands of courtesans and prostitutes, who have preserved merely the outer frame or skeleton, and the ancient themes and gestures have lost their meaning and significance.

These Art forms described are mostly secular. But, that may be because their proper significance is not understood. Were we to delve into history and probe for their meaning, we might discover

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[1] cp. with this, quotation from *Mirror of Gestures*.

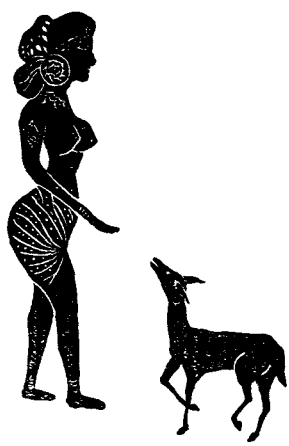
"What is said traditionally by our ancestors must therefore be kept in view. Having made the prayer etc., the dance may begin. The song must be sustained in the throat; its meaning must be shown by the hand; the mood (*bhava*) must be shown by the glances; rhythm (*tala*) is marked by the feet. For wherever the hand moves, there the glances follow; where the glances go, the mind follows; where the mind goes, the mood follows; where the mood goes there is the flavour (*rasa*)." Coomaraswamy: p. 17.

[2] Coomaraswamy: *Mirror of Gestures*, p. 11.

that most of these dances are religious in theme dressed in a secular garb, like the Krishna dances.

The religious dance proper is that of the *Devadasi*, which is a 'dance of worship'. The dance was allowed into the Brahmanic fold, upon the justification that it aided the fulfilment of the four aims of life. "The Arts are not for our instruction" says an old writer.

> "But for our delight, and this delight is something more than pleasure, it is the godlike ecstasy of liberation from the restless activity of the mind and the senses, which are the veils of all reality, transparent only when we are at peace with ourselves. From the love of many things we are led to the expression of Union, and for this reason Tiruvenkatachari does not hesitate to compare the actors' or dancers' art with the practice of Yoga. The secret of all art is self-forgetfulness "the best form of self-realisation, paradoxical as it may sound."[1]



SECTION V. Literary Arts of Ancient India.

Here, we have the most extensive field to choose from as far as the material goes. Besides, it must not be forgotten that the literary Arts are the oldest we have, judging, of course, from the existing remains. The hymns of the Rig-veda are the earliest poetic creation of the Aryan people, as well as the earliest Art monuments of India, barring Mohenjodaro. From that time onwards, the literary Art of India has been growing at a good pace. Elaborate treatises on science, Art, religion, political, sociological and economic problems, have been written from time immemorial. To these have

[1] *Ibid.*

been added creations more peculiarly of the literary muse proper, viz., poetry, drama, and fiction. Not only have these been developed in Vedic and classic Sanskrit, but also in the various vernaculars, and especially in Pali, which was second in importance only to Sanskrit. By the time we reach the end of our period, therefore, literature is a most prolific Art.

But we cannot, for obvious reasons, use literature thus in its widest sense, meaning all kinds of writings of a given period on every subject. This work deals with the Fine Arts only. Literature has, therefore, a very narrow scope, since we have defined the Fine Arts to be those whose aim is to reveal beauty and to give scope to the artist to find and express himself. There are various forms in the above enumerated list of works taken to be literature in the general sense that have no such pretensions.

Literature, Sir J. Morley[1] defines as

> "writing distinguished by artistic form or emotional appeal, and consists of all the books where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity and attraction of form."

"The best expression of the best thought reduced to writing" says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[2] According to these definitions, and the general usage, the forms of writing that come within the sphere of literature are poetry, fiction and certain forms of prose, if these forms contain the qualities mentioned.

We shall, then, use the word in this its limited sense, and deal only with the best specimens in each class, as has been the method in this work. This will involve leaving out all the Pali and vernacular literature, because the vernaculars do not fall within our period; and because it is in Sanskrit only that we have the best specimens. Besides, translations from Pali and the vernaculars are not easily accessible.

The best way to study the literature of a country is through its own language. Translations, however good (unless perhaps of the level of Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam) somehow appear empty and unreal. The present writer's inability to go to these originals for lack of any acquaintance with Sanskrit is a greater disadvantage than ever in this chapter. For Sanskrit is a very difficult language to translate, and, the beauty of the sense and sound rhythm, so essential a part of its charm, is lost in translation. Again most of these ancient works have been translated by non-Indians,

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[1] *Webster Dictionary.*
[2] *Article on Literature.*

and so leave one ever in doubt as to whether they have been able to grasp and understand the real spirit behind the work, which is what makes the translator of Omar Khayyam so famous. Hence, though the material for this portion of the work is really ample for a person who can go to the originals, for this writer it will have to be limited to the extent of good translations only, which are not many.

In treating the literary monuments of ancient India, and their place in the daily life of her people, neither a history nor a critical survey will be attempted of the whole Sanskrit literature, as being outside our scope. The method so far used in treating the other Arts, viz., to give what are considered by the best authorities to be the most representative and finest specimens of each category of the literary Art, and then, if there is any theoretic back ground, to examine it in relation to these specimens, and finally to connect the whole review with the ideal of Art and beauty already given, will be used here as well.

Sanskrit literature may be divided into three constituents Poetry, Drama, and Fiction. Of Fiction, except for three or four extent specimens such as Bana's *Kadambari*, Dandin *Dasha Kumara Charita* and *Panchatantra*,—tales and fables all of a good quality but none rising to the level of the drama lyric or Kavya poem,—we need not say much. *Harsha Charita* is more of the nature of a historical romance, and deals with the life of the monarch. Kalhana's *Raj-Tarangini*, though professedly a history of Kashmir, appears to the critical eye of the modern students of history of the same description. These are, however, all narrative and descriptive, and when not overdone, some of the word paintings of natural effects are very beautiful. Drama and poetry are really the best representative species of Sanskrit Literature, and they will accordingly engage our attention more particularly.

Let us commence with the Drama. Like most species of Indian Art, its origin is shrouded in mist and controversies, which had best be avoided.

Sanskrit dramatic writings are arranged in two classes, the *Rupakas*, and the *Aparupakas*, or the minor or inferior *rupaka*.

Of the *Rupakas* the form par excellence is the *Nataka*.[1] It is declared by the *Natya Shastra* and other writings on poetics to be

[1] "In all poetry" says an ancient verse, "Nataka (drama) is the best; in drama, Shakuntalam; in that, the fourth act, and therein the four well-known Shlokas."

the most perfect kind of dramatic composition. The subject was to be celebrated and important; and it had to concern itself with the doings of the gods, demi-gods, kings or exalted personages. All Kalidasa's plays are of this kind.

In the *Prakarna*, which is a less elevated form of the same group *Rupaka*, the tale may be pure fiction, drawn from real life in a reputable class of society The hero may be of ministerial rank, or a Brahmin or a merchant of respectability. Shudraka's *Mirchhakatika* or the *Toy Cart*, or Bhavabhuti's *Malati-Madhava*, may be said to belong to the second type. In the former, the hero is a Brahmin and the heroine a courtesan. In the latter, the hero is a minister's son and the heroine of the same class.

Two of the earliest known dramatists are Bhasa and Shudraka. The authenticity of the works of the former is not yet established. He seems to be a more prolific writer than the others. Quite a number of plays are ascribed to him of more than average merit:

> "The number of Bhasa plays and the variety of their themes indicate the activity and originality of his talent."[1]

The *Toy Cart* the only play of Shudraka in existence is really authentic, complete, and about the only drama that deals with contemporary life of the people apart from the court. It has a large list of *dramatis personæ*, of twenty-six characters; and is on the whole a very successful work, both from the point of view of action, as well as characterisation. Charudatta, Vasantasena, Maitreya and Samasthanaka are all vivid, alive and individualistic, and not at all the 'types' that the characters of the later dramas tend to be. The *rasa* here centres round the love of the brahmin and the courtesan, but the sub-plot deals with a political revolution worked out well,—perhaps the only time within the whole range of the literature—reflecting a very realistic picture of the peoples' lives and times.

It is really with Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti that the Sanskrit drama soars to its highest; while the last great name is that of Harsha, after whom decline sets in.

Being so used to the modern form of drama in which action moves swiftly, we are not able at first to grasp the exact movement of the classic Sanskrit drama. After perusing a few, however, one gets used to the pace and then the real appreciation begins. The ideals of the classical Sanskrit drama, or the *nataka*, are again entirely

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[1] Keith: *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 105.

its own, and very different from our modern conception in many ways. Some writers assert its kinship with the Shakespearean drama.[1] Others regard the *nataka* as a complete expression of the Sanskrit drama. It is the highest product of Indian poetry, and sums up in itself the final conception of literary art, "achieved by the very self-conscious creator of Indian Art".[2] It was essentially an aristocratic Art.

The object of the drama was to create in the minds of the audience a sentiment. It was in the poetic form, because poetry is essentially a means of suggesting feeling. This is the true aim of the drama, and all else is generally subservient to it. The plot was a secondary element, and only necessary to evoke *rasa* or sentiment or flavour. The classic theory specifically laid down that, in a true *nataka*, nothing was to be indulged in for its own sake. Plot, character representation, acting were all to be done with but *one* object in view, and, that was to create in the observer the corresponding *rasa* that the writer had intended.

Hence it was preferable that the plot should be as far as possible from any source that was known to the audience, such as the *Epics* or the *Vedas* or the *Puranas*. For if the plot was well known to the audience, then it would be easier to create a sentiment.

The two sentiments that were generally used in Sanskrit Drama to evoke *rasa* were the erotic and the heroic. The former was very popular, and based on a theme in the epics, which the dramatist altered as he pleased. Kalidasa changes the themes of his Shakuntala and Vikrama Orvasi in a very subtle manner, a change we readily perceive is necessary to evoke the proper sentiment.

Dramatic sentiment is produced by a dominant emotion running through the whole play, and expressing itself through the union of the determinants (*vibhava*) the consequent (*anubhava*) and the transitory feeling (*vyabhiarin*). The determinants again, are divided into the fundamental determinants, and the existing determinants. The former comprise such things as the hero and heroine The latter are conditions of place and time and circumstance that serve to foster sentiment when it has arisen ; for example the moon, the cry of the cuckoo, a storm etc.

The consequents are the external manifestations and feelings, by which the actors exhibit to the audience, the mind and heart of the persons in the drama, such as glances, smiles,

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[1] Macdonell: *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 350.
[2] Keith: *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 276.

movements, tears. The transitory feelings are given as thirty-three, such as joy, stupor, sleep, contentment, weariness[1] etc.

The *rasa*, however, is considered usually as effect, not cause; and is said to come from the *bhavas*, or conditions of the mind or body, which produce corresponding impressions upon the spectators.[2] These *bhavas* are divided into several types also, but they need not detain us here.

The *rasa* evoked, it must be borne in mind, is very different from an ordinary emotion. It is a sentiment essentially universal in character, generic, and disinterested,[3] while an emotion is individual and immediately personal. An emotion, again, may be pleasant or painful; but the *rasa* awakened is marked by that impersonal joy, characteristic of the contemplation of the Supreme Being by the adept, a bliss which is absolutely without personal feeling.

In order to produce such a sentiment, every play must have a hero, preferably a God, a Demi god, or a King. Most of the existing specimens conform to his rule, except the *Toy Cart*, *Malati Madhav*, and *Mudra-Rakshasa*. The former two as we have already noted, do not belong to the category of *natakas*.

In order to give the *rasa* scope to work itself out, the hero must be struggling against odds. Hence there must be a villain, taken of course in the dramatic sense. However much the odds may go against the hero in the action, the end must be that he succeeds, and the villain who justly deserves it should be the sufferer.

There is no Tragedy in the classical Sanskrit drama, such as *Romeo and Juliet* for example, where two innocent creatures are driven to untimely death by the hand of fate, or the agonies of a Lear, who grief-distracted, is driven to madness, and ultimately death. Indian drama would brook no such ending. If human agency found it beyond its power to achieve a happy end, then the superhuman must intervene, as is well illustrated by Harsha's *Nagananda*, where *Jimutavahana*, though dead, is restored again to life by the powers of the Goddess Gauri. Similarly, the brilliantly dramatic end of *Uttara Rama Charita*, where Sita is carried off on her vindication as unfit to dwell among mortals, is sacrificed to this requirement. The reason for this desire to have only a happy end,

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Last 3 paras adaptation from *Sanskrit Drama*.

[1] Keith: *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 315.

[2] Wilson: *Dramatic System of the Hindoos*, p. 11.

[3] Keith: *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 318.

or to avoid a tragic end, is that if evil which cannot triumph over good is made to, then it spoils the essence of the drama, hinders the even course of *rasa* development, and finally leaves the minds of the observer unsatisfied and unbalanced.

In Sanskrit drama characters were never an end in themselves ; they generally conformed to classes. The king, the heroine, her confidant, and the Vidusaka were indispensable, and found in almost every Sanskrit drama. The hero was essentially a good man, at times good even to the extent of being superhuman, as Rama is, when intent on his *dharma* he drives away the chaste Sita, because the people think her unchaste. Perhaps we may trace the hand of destiny in this ; but then there is hardly any mental struggle that Rama appears to undergo before he finally decides. He does good as if by instinct, and that is exactly what a demi-god is supposed to do. In spite of this rule, some writers manage to bring in a little mental conflict in the mind of the hero, as in the case of Rakshasa in *Mudra-Rakshasa*. But anything near a Hamlet or Othello was hardly attempted, as it would have completely upset the development of *rasa*. A character like Macbeth or Milton's Satan or Goethe's Mephistopheles, could not even be conceived under the Indian theory, for that would mean sympathy with evil, which was the last thing the dramatic theory intended. The villain justly deserved his fate, whatever it was ; and there was no cause at all for sympathy with him. Because of this, says Keith, characters in an Indian drama tend to be types, and hardly ever individuals ;[1] and therefore lacking in the essential traits of humanity.

Against this we have Macdonell's statement that "the Art of the dramatist (Sanskrit) is not to portray types of characters, but individual persons ; nor do they observe the rule of the unity of time or place".[2] Besides, it must not be forgotten that certain characters of many a drama are distinctly individual, and certainly not types. Specially can this be asserted of Kalidasa's heroines. Shakuntala, Urvasi, are distinct individuals. Perhaps Malavika is a very shadowy figure ; but the two queens are quite well and humanly characterised. Bhavabhuti's Malati and Sita are, again, distinct personalities, who can hardly be called types. Vasantasena, and, indeed in that play almost every character, is a person living his or her individual separate existence, and can hardly be classed as a type. Perhaps to some of the Hero-Kings this classification may apply

[1] Keith: *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 288.
[2] Macdonell: *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 350.

in a very wide sense ; but on a close examination one is able to discern certain individualistic traits even in these characters. For example King Dushyanta and Agnimitra are both perhaps of a type, yet, despite that, they are individuals. In one a stronger sense of duty is apparent than in the other. In Rama, we see a different character altogether. He is far removed from the above type, and does not hesitate even a moment to do his appointed *dharma*, even when it affects him adversely, e. g. when going into exile, declining the throne, or banishing Sita clearly show. In the *Veni Samhara* on the other hand, Bhima has not the slightest qualms about his horrible orgy in the field of battle against the Kauravas who had insulted his wife in open court. He makes a character utterly unique.

Perhaps some of the minor characters such as the friend of the heroine, are a type, always gay and quick at repartee. The Vidushaka is also a type, just as the *fools* of Shakespeare. Yet who can say of those that they were not individuals? Perhaps the Indian Vidushakas were not so vividly drawn, as to appear to be critics of the affairs of man as the Shakespearean clowns were. They may be classed as a type, who are individualistic only in so far as the evocation of the *rasa* requires them to be. This was so because the object of Sanskrit dramatic representation was neither to portray life only, nor character only, but both ; and that only in so far as necessary for reproducing sentiment.

The whole drama had a purpose, as quite a number of modern dramas, such as Shaw's have. But the purpose was of a very different character, and peculiarly Indian, quite in conformity with the purpose of the other Arts already discussed. It was, as we have seen, to evoke *rasa* or sentiment. To evoke *rasa* is to evoke beauty ; and that was the aim of the drama, to make the spectators feel the same sentiment as was the artist's when creating. A bliss absolute without personal feeling ; such a sentiment only must the *nataka* the purest form of Sanskrit drama encourage. In order to appreciate this, therefore, the spectator must be a man of taste. Those whose life had left them barren of impressions or emotions were incapable of relishing a drama.[1] In that sense, the Sanskrit drama may well be called an aristocratic Art ; because none but the cultured could appreciate it to the full.

It was only through the imitation of life or its artistic reproduction, that this end could be achieved. But that was secondary and incidental, just as the artists used the human form in sculpture to ex-

[1] Keith : *Sanskrit Drama*, p. 318.

press their transcendental ideals. To use Bharata's language, the purpose of drama was not to flatter any party, but to represent the true and essential nature of the world, not external form but the Spirit behind matter. When the Devas complained to Brahma, at the first performance of the drama at Indra's play-festival, that it represented their defeat, Brahma thus answered them—

> "The play is not merely for your pleasure, or the pleasure of the Devas, but exhibits moods for all the three worlds. I made this play as following the movement of the world, yielding the fruit of righteousness to those who follow the moral law, pleasure to those who follow lust, and restraint for the unruly replete with diverse moods (bhava) informed with the varying passions of the soul, linked to the deeds of all mankind, the best, the middle and the low, affording excellent counsel, pastime and all else."
>
> "The drama shall be the source of all counsel in matters of flavour (rasa), mood (bhava), and every rite, it shall serve as a timely resting place for those who are grieved, weary, unhappy, or engaged in an ardourous discipline, bestowing righteousness, renown, long life, fortune, increase of reason; affording counsel to the world—The drama is to be understood as witnessing the deeds of Gods and Titans, kings of spheres, and Brahman sages. Drama is that which accords with the order of the world (sva-bhava)."[1]

From this quotation from Bharata's *Natya-Shastra*, the most authentic work on the subject, we find that to portray the gruesome realities of life, merely for the sake of imitating life, was never the aim of the drama. The drama as a class never descended to the level of the representation of the fleeting domestic scuffles of the harem system under polygamic conditions. *Malvika Agnimitra*, and *Ratnavali* are perhaps the only two that may fall into this category The plot, again, is stereotyped and concerns itself, when not dealing with Rama and Sita, with a King falling in love with a woodland nymph like Sakuntala, or an Apsara like Urvasi, or a princess introduced into the harem like Ratnavali, Malvika, or Priyadareika. The *Mudra-Rakshasa* is an exception, since the erotic is utterly absent in that play ; and even the heroic is only in patches. There is but one woman in the whole play, and that not in the *Shringara Rasa* ; gruesome is all but approached in the final scene staged on the execution ground. The main theme of this drama is political intrigue and tactical manœuvres of the most complicated and doubtful nature, which, however, admittably serve to throw into bold relief the main rule and general character of the typical classic Indian drama.

[1] Coomaraswamy: *Mirror of Gestures*, pp. 2-3.

In drama, music, song, dance and acting are all there with the same purpose. namely to evoke *rasa*. Apart from that, and for their own sake, they are never introduced as in so many modern Indian dramas, where, instead of aiding the development of the sentiment, they come at such a wrong moment that they positively hinder it. The result is that one finds oneself smiling, where the writer must have intended to bring the spectator almost to the verge of tears.

Acting in ancient India was a regulated art, and was not left to the impulse of the actor to be filled up at the last moment. There was an elaborate code of gestures, which the actor or actress had to master. The dancer had a similar gesture code to master ; and for both, this code formed a symbolic language which the cultured audience thoroughly understood. In the *Mirror of Gestures* by Dr. Coomaraswamy we have some of these classified gestures which clearly show what this language was like. There are detailed directions for the poise of the body, hands, legs, fingers, waist, neck, mouth, eyes, and eyebrows, in order correctly to interpret direction of the dramatist, such as watering the plants, climbing a chariot, plucking a flower, etc. Within these limits the actor had the fullest opportunity to express himself, just as in sculpture or in painting. Within the limits of the Art canons, as set down in the *Shastras*, the artist had full liberty to express himself ; and the best of artists often did so to great advantage. But for mediocre artists this was too stringent a demand, and they very often failed in their efforts.

All this in no wise means that these ancient dramatists were incapable of producing an illusion of realism. They did produce the most poignant and strikingly life-like scenes, full of indescribably tender pathos, gruesome horror, wherever this was essential for the promotion of the sentiment. That awful scene of Tantric worship in *Malati-Madhav* is horrifyingly realistic, the more so because the actors are real human beings of flesh and blood, unlike the weird sisters of Macbeth, who were neither of the earth nor of the air. The first scene of the first act of *Uttara Rama Charita*, where Rama and Sita are going over the picture gallery surveying scenes of their exiled life, is full of human tenderness, and emotion very life-like in its effect. The whole of *Malvika Agnimitra* is in the realistic strain, while none need dispute the terrible mirror of political life and intrigue held up in the *Mudra-Rakshasa*. About the most living scene, yet poetic and most touching that I have read is Shakuntala's departure from the hermitage. In spite of the fact that it is beautifully wreathed into natural imagery, the

rasa is so well worked out that it is impossible to go through it without tears. The first scene of Act I of the same drama, is also full of effect ; the movement of the deer, the skill of the charioteer, the speed of the horses, and the impatience of the King, are all realistic yet artistic touches, drawing the reader so completely from himself, that he actually starts fancying himself one of that merry hunt.

Hence realistic effects, whenever the dramatists desired to work them out, were easily achieved and very artistically managed. But that was exactly what they did not always want to do. Their aim was very different as we have already shown, and hence their results have to be judged by that standard.

From the principles of the dramatic theory just elaborated, it will be seen how easily we can work these out from the main ideals of life and art, accepted among the people of Aryavarta.

The first main ideal of Indian Art, we have said, was that it was not concerned merely with copying actual life, but that it went beyond form, or the material world, to grasp the inner and deeper meaning of existence, and presented to mankind some aspects of the One Unity behind all Diversity. Following this ideal, the classical Sanskrit drama is also not concerned with the outward, but with the ideal or ultimate Reality or Beauty, not the everyday life of men and women, but the sublimated essence of living, as in the lives of the Gods and the Titans. These may be given earthly names and earthly guise, but all the same they are not human individuals, but ideal types of what men and women should be. Sita and Shakuntala were both such, too good to dwell among erring mortals, though they lived among them, wore earthly garb, used earthly language, and thought earthly thoughts, as portrayed by the master dramatists. When the earthly folks, therefore, were not able to realise their perfection, the supernatural agents swept them off to the spheres where they could be better appreciated.

In considering the Literary Arts, especially Drama and Poetry, we find that almost all the extant specimens are of Hindu, or rather Brahmanic, creation. Except for the dramas of Aswagosh and *Nagananda* by Harsha, there are no dramas existing of Buddhist origin ; while Jain writers, if any, are not commonly known. Hence the second ideal of Indian Art, which is so beautifully worked out in sculpture reliefs of Sanchi and Amaravati, is hardly found within this sphere. Except perhaps the *Nagananda*, where the equality and unity of all existence is well emphasised, we have no other

drama where this is clearly brought out. We may, if we so think, trace this in the way the Sanskrit dramatists weave nature, man, and supernatural beings, all into one in their dramas. This can hardly explain the fact as this is an essential of a romantic drama, and the Sanskrit drama is romantic, and, therefore, would have this element even if the above ideal did not inspire it.

Poetry in Ancient India.

Drama and poetry are very much allied, because the drama is itself, except for minor dialogues, written in lyric verse. Hence, as in the drama, the purpose of classic Sanskrit poetry was to evoke *rasa*, or suggest beauty, or reveal reality. *Kavyam Rasatmakam Vakyam*, says the principal treatise writer on the subject, in defining poetry.

The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* are the earliest examples of Indian poetry. They show considerable imaginative capacity, beauty of phraseology and word music; at times even very profound thought, but on the whole they are mainly descriptive. The *Upanishads* are full of scepticism, and a deep desire to probe into the secret of the Universe.

In the Epics we come across the poetic form of classic Sanskrit quite definitely; and have emotion, action, and description laid out as required by the prescribed rules of the Sanskrit poetics. The Epics are the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, both of enormous length, and at places full of vigour and sentiment, but on the whole narrative.

It is with the name of the greatest dramatist of India that the best specimens of the *Kavya* are also associated. Only three of Kalidasa's poems have come down to us. One is an epic, one a *Kavya* proper. *Raghuvamsa*, deals with the story of the race of Raghu, and is not so fascinating as the other two. The descriptions are rich, spirited, and often rise to true poetry, and, despite its length, the reader remains under the spell of Kalidasa's superb fancy, wonderful imagery, and inimitable sweetness of versification. The aerial passage over India seems to be a unique idea of Kalidasa (which was copied later by other writers with hardly equal success) foreshadowing our aeroplanes; for here are pictured Rama and Sita travelling from Lanka to Ayodhya in an aerial chariot.

The *Kumara Sambhava* deals with the winning of Shiva by Uma the daughter of the Himalayas, whose beauty is vividly sug-

gested in a manner typically Indian through the various attributes of Nature ;

"Blest was that hour and all the world was gay,
When Mena's daughter saw the light of day,
A rosy glow filled all the brightening sky,
And odorous breeze came sweeping softly by,
Breathed round the hill a sweet unearthly strain."
And the glad heavens poured down their flowing rain."[1]

The exquisite grace and sweetness of the tender maiden seems to have intoxicated all nature with new life.

Another beautiful passage is where the austere hermit feels a passion for this devoted soul dawning upon him. The whole picture is exquisitely worked out. The hermit's passion was strengthened by all the aid the god of love, *Kama*, could give, who stood hidden exhausting all the content of his quiver ; yet the strong heart would not yield to love. As the Great God felt the depth of his being stirred, he looked round to find the cause. And lo ! he spied *Kama*. So great was the anger that flames leapt forth from the eyes of the *Yogi*, that poor *Kama* was on the instant burnt to cinders. Uma, disgraced, went into penance ; and so the tale runs, full of pathos, tenderness, exquisite beauty of language, and rich and appropriate similes. To seek for illustration is like seeking for a particular fragrance in a garden of flowers.

"Like the moon's influence on the sea at rest
Came passion stealing over the hermit's breast;
While on the maiden's lips that mocked the dye
Of ripe red fruit he bent his melting eye.
And Oh ! how showed the lady's love for him,
The heaving bosom and each quivering limb
Like young kadambas, when the leaf buds swell
At the warm touch of spring they love so well."[2]

Indeed to quote but a few passages from a Master like Kalidasa, who knew the course of love so well and so minutely even to the tenderest detail, and hence evoked the *rasa* perfectly, is really to spoil a beautiful flower by breaking it into its petals ; and hence we will attempt it no further.

The next *Kavya*, and much shorter than the other, is the *Megha-duta*, or Cloud-Messenger, about the most fanciful one can dream of. A poor Yaksha was banished from fair Alaka for being

[1] R. C. Dutt: *Civilisation of Ancient India*: "Poetry in India", Vol. III, p. 430.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 431.

too fond of his wife, and neglecting his duties, far beyond the Vindhyas. In his exile he could think of none but his beloved, to whom he sent a messenger, a unique one, a rain cloud, to tell of his yearning for her. He traces the course the cloud would take, describing by this device the panoramic view of India, which, besides showing his wide geographical knowledge, gives an interesting and instructive picture of India as it was then. Metaphors and similes abound. Most beautiful is the description of his heart's longing.[1] One can almost hear the sigh of despair, when he, in the midst of this fanciful revery, wakes up to the fact that the cloud will actually meet her, his beloved, while he will not. The description of "immortal Ujjaini" is fittingly given in the choicest words and apt comparison.

> "To fair Ujjain's palaces and pride,
> And beautious, daughters turn awhile aside,
> Whose glancing eyes, whose lightning, looks unseen,
> Dark are thy days and thou, in vain hast been.
>
> Here as the early zephyrs waft along,
> In swelling harmony, the woodland song,
> They scatter sweetness from the fragrant flower,
> That joyful opens to the morning hour;
> With friendly zeal they sport around the maid
> Who early courts their vivifying aid,
> And cool from Sipra's jelid waves, embrace,
> Each languid limb and enervated grace."[2]

With Kalidasa, then, the best Indian poetry is rightly summed up. And, as our purpose is to touch on only the best that the age could give, we need treat of no other, except perhaps Bhairavi. Forceful and vigorous, he combined spirited language with lofty

[1] "Goddess beloved, how vainly I emplore,
The world to trace the semblance I adore;
Thy graceful form the flexile tendril shews;
And like thy locks the peacock's plumage glows;
Mild as thy cheeks, the moon's new beams appear,
And those soft eyes adorn the timid deer;
In rippling brooks thy curling brows I see
But only views combine these charms in thee.
E'en in these wilds our unrelenting fate
Proscribe the union love and art create.
When with colours that the rock supplies,
O'er the rude stone thy pictured beauties rise;
Fain would I think once more we fondly meet;
And seek to fall in homage at thy feet;
In vain; for envious tears my purpose blight,
And veil the lovely image from my sight."

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 431—Wilson's translation.

eloquence. But hardly does he come anywhere near the refined and courtly Art of Kalidasa, so replete with beauty of phrase, and delicacy of emotion.

In these poems, as in the drama, the ideals of the search for the Infinite and the Ideal of Unity are there, perhaps not so distinct, for we hardly have enough to judge from. The love of Beauty is perfectly portrayed as seen in the few examples given.

Lyric Poetry. To give this class of poems a separate section is hardly justified by the specimens, because there are very few lyric poems in existence. It is to Kalidasa that we owe the best, and his Art in general has already been reviewed.

The *Cloud-Messenger* we have treated as a *Kavya*, but it is classed by some as a lyric. Next comes what is called *Ritu-Samhara*, or the *Cycle of Seasons*. The poet gives the description in as flowery and ornate a language as possible, of the six seasons of the year recognised by Sanskrit poets. With flowing descriptions of the beauties of nature in which erotic scenes are interspersed, the poet adroitly interweaves the expression of human emotions. "Perhaps no other work of Kalidasa manifests so strikingly the poet's deep sympathy with nature, his keen powers of observation, and his skill in depicting an Indian landscape in vivid colours."

The joy with which the thirsting and parching earth greets the first shower of the seasonal monsoon is thus described :—

> "The mountain fills the soul with yearning thoughts of love,
> When rain charged clouds bend down to kiss the towering rocks,
> When round about the slopes the streams gush down
> And throngs of peacocks that begin to dance are seen.

After Kalidasa, the next famous name is that of Bhartrihari, a grammarian, philosopher, and poet. It is only the literary training of India that can make such a combination possible.[1] He wrote three groups of centals of verses, which are quite popular. The *hundred stanzas of Amaru*, says Macdonnel, 'are important lyrical and erotic works also.'[2]

But in the whole range of lyrical Sanskrit poetry, it would be difficult to rival the exquisite music and the incomparable phrasing,—not to speak of the beauty of sentiment—of Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*. The whole romance of Radha and Krishna is knit together in a series of poems, which are intended to be sung. It is highly erotic yet suggestive, without the least trace of vulgarity or crude-

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 340.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 342.

ness. In fact refinement of expression, exquisite imagery and word music are its key notes. It is the one of its kind and the best. The reader may judge for himself from the extracts following

Jaya Deva informs us that Krishna, having known the bliss of Radha's affection, forgets it soon, under the magical and seductive atmosphere of romance and worship, bestowed on him by the *Gopis*. Thus they enchant and captivate him :—

"One with star blossomed champâk wreathed, wooes him to rest
his head,
On the dark pillow of her breast so tenderly outspread;
And o'er his brow with roses blown she fans a fragrance rare,
That falls on the enchanted sense like rain in thirsty air;
While the company of damsels wave many and odorous spray,
And Krishna laughing, toying, sighs the soft spring away.

Another gazing in his face, sits wistfully apart,
Searching it with those looks of love that leap from heart to heart;
Her eyes—afire with shy desire, veiled by their lashes black—
Speak so that Krishna cannot choose but send the message back;
In the company of damsels whose bright eyes in the ring
Shine round him with soft meanings in the merry light of spring.

The third one of that dazzling band of dwellers in the wood—
Body and bosom panting with pulse of youthful blood—
Leans over him, as in his ear a lightsome thing to speak,
And then with leaf-soft lip imprints a kiss below his cheek;
A kiss that thrills, and Krishna turns at the silken touch
To give it back,—ah Radha ! forgetting thee too much.

And one with arch smile beckons him away from Jumna's banks,
Where the tall bamboo bristle like spears in battle ranks,
And plucks his cloth to make him come into the mango shade,
Where the fruit is ripe and golden, and the milk and cakes are laid;
Oh ! golden red the mangoes, and glad the feasts of spring,
And fair the flowers to lie upon and sweet the dancers sing.

Sweetest of all that Temptress who dances for him now
With subtle feet which part and meet in the Ras measure slow,
To the chime of silver bangles, and the beat of rose-leaf hands,
And pipe and lute and cymbal played by the woodland bands;
So that wholly passion laden— eye, ear, sense, soul overcome—
Krishna is theirs in the forest; his heart forgets its home.

So, Krishna laughs and toys, dreaming his spring away with these woodland nymphs, till suddenly penitence dawns upon him, and he goes in search for Radha.

Radha in the meanwhile, heartsick at such neglect, and seeing her heavenly beauty slighted so, has withdrawn, and there in her solitude she sings her misery in a plaintive and pathetic lay. *Must love*

thee—cannot choose but love thee ever. Yet, she sighs half hopeless, and in despair utters : *Will there not come an end to earthly madness? Shall I not, past the sorrow, have the gladness?*

Thinking she aught to, she hastily summons her maid and excitedly bids her.

"Go to him,—win him hither,—wisper low
How he may find me if he searches well;
Say, if he will—joys past his hope to know
Await him here; go now to him, and tell
Where Radha is, and that henceforth she charms
His spirit to her arms."

"Lead him; say softly I shall chide his blindness,
And vex him with my angers; yet add this,
He shall not vainly sue for loving kindness,
Nor miss to see me close, nor lose the bliss
That lives upon my lips, nor be denied
The rose-throne at my side."

The maid goes on her errand and discovers wanton Krishna in as listless a mood, thinking of none but Radha whom his folly has lost for him.

"Radha, Enchantress ! Radha queen of all !
Gone—lost, because she found me sinning here;
And I so stricken with my foolish fall,
I could not stay her out of shame and fear;
She will not hear;

In her disdain and grief vainly I call."

Yet the man typical in Krishna—a perfect touch—cries out

"Canst thou—because I did forget—forsake me"

Finding Krishna in such pangs of remorse, the maid pours out her mistress's message in light but vivid verse. Krishna, elated quickly beckons her go, and report to Radha his remorse, beg her forgiveness, and in all haste fetch her to him. The maid hurries off but returns without Radha who is unbending. Says she

"Krishna ! 'tis thou must come (she sang)
Ever she waited thee in heavenly bower;
The lotus seeks not the wandering bee,
The bee must find the flower."

Krishna agrees, but he tarries a little, and appears at dawn instead of the night. The enraged Radha's imagination runs riot. She

imagines him again in the arms of another, and, in stanzas that both by their words and music reveal the torment and struggle of her great love, she prays for the last relief,—death

"Wind of Indian waves !
If that thou canst, blow poison here not nard;
God of the five shafts ! shoot thy sharpest hard,
And kill me, Radha,—Radha who forgave !
Or, bitter River,
Yamun ! be Yama's sister ! be Death's kin !
Swell thy waves up to me and gulf me in,
Cooling this cruel, burning pain for ever."

Thus this tender soul cries for death, rather than a life of ignomy without her lover. But on the morrow he appears. His presence transforms Radha, and she beams radiance once again. His patient form on bended knees, trembling with fear, wonder, joy, love and reverence, reveals to Radha that victory is hers.

Her feminine wiles come to her aid. She chides him ; bids him go away and say no more "lest I believe thee". In the last, Krishna reads hope and springs upon it. His last appeal is a masterpiece ; hence it is reproduced almost wholly.

Sings Krishna

O angel of my hope ! O my heart's home !
My fear is lost in love, my love in fear;
This bids me trust my burning wish, and come,
That checks me with its memories, drawing near.
Lift up thy look, and let the thing it saith
End fear with grace, or darken love to death.

Or only speak once again, for though thou slay me,
Thy heavenly mouth must move, and I shall hear
Dulcet delights of perfect music sway me
Again—again the voice so blest and dear;
Sweet judge ! the prisoner prayeth for his doom
That he may hear his fate divinely come.

Speak once more ! then thou canst not choose but show
Thy mouth's unparalleled and honeyed wonder,
Where, like pearls hid in red lipped shell, the row
Of pearly teeth thy rose red lips lie under;
Ah me ! I am the bird that woos the moon,
And pipes—poor fool ! to make it glitter soon.

* * *

Thou, thou hast been my blood, my breath, my being;
The pearl to plunge for in the sea of life,
The sight to strain for, past the bounds of seeing;



(*By courtesy Kalliance Circumsee Dunn*)

THE CHASTISEMENT

The victory to win through longest strife;
My Queen! my crowned mistress! my shepherd bride
Take this for truth, that what I say beside.

Of bold love—grown full—orbed at sight of thee—
May be forgiven with quick remission;
For, thou divine fulfilment of all hope!
Thou all—undreamed completion of the vision!
I gaze upon thy beauty, and my fear
Passes as clouds do, when the moon shines clear.

So if thou'rt angry still, this shall avail,
Look straight at me, and let thy bright glance wound me;
Fetter me! gyve me! lock me in the goal
Of thy delicious arms; make fast around me
The silk-soft manacles of wrists and hands,
Then kill me! I shall never break those bands.

* * *

Thy brow like smooth Bandhûka leaves; thy cheek
Which the dark-tinted Madhuk's velvet shows;
Thy long lashed lotus eye, lustrous and meek;
Thy nose Tila-bud; thy teeth like rows
Of Kunda-petals! he who pierceth hearts
Points with thy loveliness all five darts.

But Radiant, Perfect, Sweet, Supreme, forgive!
My heart is wise—my tongue is foolish still:
I know where I come—I know I live—
I know that thou art Radha—that this will
Last and be heaven: that I have leave to rise
Up from thy feet and look into thine eyes!

* * *

Dearest glory that stills my voice,
Beauty unseen, unknown, unthought!
Splendour of love in whose sweet light
Darkness is past and nought;

* * *

Radha, enchantress! Radha, the Queen!
Be this trespass forgiven—
In that I dare with courage too much
And a heart afraid,—so bold it is grown—
To hold thy hand with a bridegroom's touch,
And take thee for mine, mine own."[1]

The perfect cadence of this verse must be lost to us who cannot read the original. Yet, to any really interested reader I would suggest this method. Get a good Sanskrit reader to read the original

[1] Edwin Arnold: *The Indian Song of Songs* from *Indian Poetry.*

text to you, while you listen with your eyes closed. Within a short while you will yourself start feeling the grip of the cadence.

The reader must wonder why I have quoted from this poem so copiously, while I have been almost frugal in the rest of the chapter. My only answer is, that, the fact that *Gita Govinda* is translated is known to very few people. I inquired of so many and was told no translations existed until one day by sheer chance a book called *Indian Poetry* by Edwin Arnold fell into my hands ; and therein, to my surprise and delight, I discovered a translation of *Gita Govinda* entitled *The Indian Song of Songs*. Perhaps very many readers have had the same difficulty that I had, and hence to facilitate them I have spared this beautiful lyric more space.

Summing up. This last section concludes this chapter on the review of Art in Ancient India.

We have glanced over Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music, Dancing and the Literary Arts, concentrating on one aspect, and stressing only those expressions which appear to embody directly the ideals of Art already described.

In this array, which the imagination of the race genius has assembled before us, is embodied the drama of the human destiny, the agonies and triumphs of the human soul, in the hardest of granites, or softest of colours ; voiced forth from the lofty heights of the lats and shikharas, or floating on the wings of the haunting melody of an Indian Art song, or, evoked through the subtle and graceful movements of the 'bride of the gods', as, with the rhythm of her gestures, she worships the inspirer of her Art, the great God Shiva.

Tale after tale, episode after episode, of that splendid struggle—the striving of the Human Soul—are related on the surface of the walls and ceilings of the ancient caves and temples, with what may at first appear to be no apparent coherence, linking the whole racial expression. Observe the walls and ceilings of Ajanta and Ellora the terraces of Borobudur, and the layer upon layer of the sculptures piled to adorn the shikharas of the Hindu Temples? What impression do these leave? Could we say they were the varied expressions of the same process? It needs but the right perspective to determine the unity that links these varied expressions. After that is acquired, the longer the eye dwells on this bewildering mass, more and more of the message enshrined within these expressions reveals itself. They all have but one message to reveal, the same truth to tell, namely, that all Creation is One, and the Realisation of this Unity is the Sole Purpose of Existence.

This message has been adequately expressed, and at times inadequately. It is not for a moment implied that every Art creation of the Indian is Beautiful, and far less Perfect. For defects there are in all human achievements, and must be. But, in an ancient racial artistic expression, what is to be considered is not the defects but the effect of the whole Art that spreads over a period of a thousand years. What is it that the ancients wanted to reveal? And has their Art been successful in this achievement? So many of the expressions have been illustrated, and it was seen that these creations overflow with the love and devotion that gave them birth. Their message is so apparent, once the symbols are understood, that none can miss it. That the Indians were masters in what they produced can hardly be denied.

Their 'ideal of Beauty' is unique ; yet, consistently striven far, and captured as near to perfection as can be in certain *motifs*, while a suggestion of this ideal pervades the rest of the Art, and is subtly brought out through the expression and action of the piece, the proportions used, the technique, and atmosphere created. Some of the methods used make us wonder as to their purpose ; but a little concentration changes the wonder into marvel, and we begin to realise that profound conceptions have their own occult means of knitting together, and revealing, through forms in apparent confusion, their ultimate purpose. It has been the confusion of many why Indian sculptors have used the method of giving the principal characters of their piece a size larger than the rest of humanity surrounding it. The famous Bodhissattva at Ajanta is an example of this method. What does this apparent disproportion signify? Let us observe the Bodhissattva. He is a man of the world, richly decked with jewels and ornaments. He has a wife by his side. Yet his face shows that though he may be in and part of the life round him, yet, in spirit, he is not one with them.

> "The whole world is in his eyes, and with it, an immense and ineffable compassion.—Grandly he commerges detached, and yet not isolated from all those variously occupied forms around; or if isolated, isolated only in spirit."

It is this isolation of the spirit, or advanced evolution that is brought out by this method, which is so ably and effectively used in many sculptured reliefs, besides Ajanta.

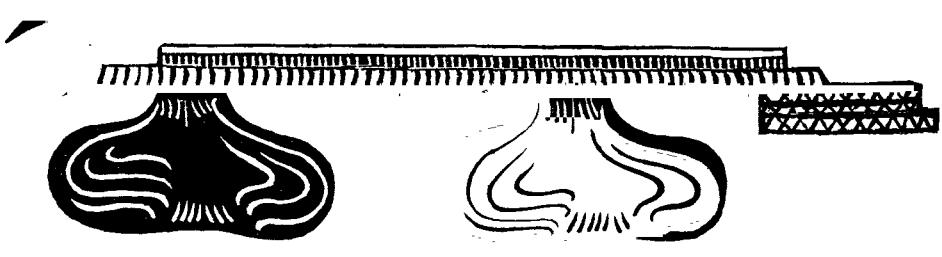
Another symbolism of Indian Art, misunderstood very often, is the symbol of many headed and limbed figures. The symbolism of this has been explained, also the aesthetic value of the symbolism

has been considered, and we have found that, in the hands of master artists, this symbol has been deftly fashioned and marvellously proportioned, and has become an important Art motif of the Brahmanic age, round which so much of the Art of the classical period centres.

Yet, certain scholars have, as already pointed out, termed this *motif* grotesque, and blamed the Art of this age as being very defective because of lack of restraint. This brings me to this question of defect in Art,—especially a traditional and racial Art!

Not being an artist myself, I do not think I will venture to go into what may be technical defects or shortcomings of Indian Art. Besides, defect is such a relative term. As pointed out, some of the best motifs of the Art have been termed defective by others, hence in a work of this character, which is not an artistic treatise, it is futile to discuss this topic. We need just add that, as Indian Art was a racial Art, whatever its defects were the defects of the race which produced the Art, and, whatever its merits were also the merits of the race that gave birth to the Art.

It is the tradition of such an Art that is alive with us to-day, though in a very dilapidated form. This we need to rejuvenate, so that it may once more become the vehicle of a racial expression as it once was.





CHAPTER VIII

ART IN THE DAILY LIFE OF ANCIENT INDIA

We have given in the last chapter an outline of some of the Fine Arts cultivated in Ancient India, correlating their cultivation to the people's life in general, as well as to the main motive forces and racial instincts that gave them birth. In the present chapter, an attempt will be made to ascertain the exact place Art occupied in the daily life of those people ; and see, how far the cultivation of Art beautified life, and the conduct of life exalted Art.

We have seen how the ancient Indians worshipped, what sort of temples they built, what congregational halls they erected, and what arts, graces and philosophies they cultivated in their life as a people. Let us now see what kind of homes they fashioned for themselves and the atmosphere and surroundings they lived in. An essential basis for a good home is a house. How did the ancients build their dwelling houses? As already mentioned in the section on architecture, we have no remains of any Indian secular building, coming from the period dealt with. Models, how-

ever reconstructed from sculptured reliefs,[1] give us some idea of these residences.[2]

Houses in Ancient India.

Havel tells us that the ancient monasteries were built on the plan of an Aryan joint family house.[3] The plan of a *Vihara*, and so probably of a dwelling house, consisted of, first, a verandah supported by pillars, in the centre of which was the main gateway. This verandah opened into a large hall, often supported by pillars. In it were scattered stone benches for the inmates to sit on. Round this hall, which was invariably a rectangular area, were the living rooms. On top of these was generally a terrace, where the members of an Aryan household met and received their visitors, and took their ease, or had their games, recreation, or dalliance, on soft moonlit nights of the Indian spring and autumn.[4] Ornamentation was usually lavished upon the main entrance and the pillars that supported the verandah. The benches in the courtyard were all richly carved, probably even painted. At times, at the farther side of the Hall, the family had its own private shrine. The wall space around this courtyard was very likely covered by delicious frescoes, judging from the injunctions of the *Kama-sutra*, or even the models at Ajanta. Perhaps in the days of the sacrifices, the *pater familias* presided over the household sacrifices in this courtyard; and later, it probably enshrined the images of the household gods. That being so, its decoration must have been the best the family could afford.

Decoration.

Materials most favoured for living houses were generally wood and brick. These were covered over, both externally and internally with white chunam, and the outer surface was brilliantly painted upon with frescoes, designs, and figures.[5] Some of these patterns were of wreath work, creeper work, fine ribbon work, and dragon's tooth work.

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[1] Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts*, p. 125.

[2] The remains of houses, streets, sewers, baths, discovered in the Indus Valley recently, and described and illustrated so graphically in Sir J. Marshall's monumental work on Mohen-jo-Daro, fall outside our period in as much as, not having so far any definite historical data about the people who built these works, it has been thought best to leave them out of this work.

[3] *History of Aryan Civilisation*, Chap. I.

[4] References to this are to be found in almost every classic Sanskrit poem or drama e.g. Mudra-Rakshasa speaking of the Flower Festival, probably corresponding to modern Holi, described by the Emperor Chandragupta from the Terrace of his own palace.

R. David: *B. India*, p. 70.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Dr. Coomaraswamy describes domestic houses of Madura and Tanjore of the 17th and 18th Centuries. What is very remarkable is that their plan and construction seem hardly to differ from those already described. He gives illustrations of some of the pillars and cornices in these houses, which would very clearly give us an idea of how the ancient Indian buildings must have been ornamented.[1]

Another portion of the house, where ornamentation was lavished, was the main door and the windows. These were made of wood, as was everything of architecture in Ancient India for a long time.

> "The oldest type of door consisted of a solid adze heron leaf without hinges; from these there were transitions to the most elaborate carved and panelled doors of the Punjab, Rajputana, Gujrat, Mysore etc., the oldest existing examples appear to be the Chitor doors, now kept in the Ajmer Mosques of Kwaja Sahib."[2]

The writer does not mention the exact date of these doors. A very interesting as well as instructive idea of how these ancient Indian doorways were constructed, and their relation to the rest of the architectural and decorative scheme, is vividly set before our eyes in Plate 81[3] portraying the *Vidhura Pandita Jataka.* Equally alive and colourful was the gateway of Vasantasena's abode. It was high and majestic, almost suggesting it wanted a peep into the sky. It was adorned with strings of jasmine garlands.[4] The portals were of ivory. Banners and festoons fluttered from its imposing turrets, and seemed to invite people to enter. The doors proper were of gold, thickly set with diamonds. "Yes", the reluctant Maitreya has to confess "Vasantasena's house door is a beautiful thing. Really, it forcibly challenges the attention of a man who doesn't care about such things." Allowing for poetic exaggeration, if Vasantasena—a mere courtesan,—could afford such luxury, the imagination has not to travel much further to recreate the dwellings of the nobility of Ujjain, a city according to Kalidasa without a peer.

Perforated windows are indeed a unique feature of Oriental architecture. They were very popular in India too. The examples existing to-day in Northern India are mostly of the Moghul type, but Dr. Coomaraswamy says that old Dravidian and Chalukyan stonework shows that built up *jalis* of this kind are also indigenous in the South. These Southern forms are usually of solid wood, perforated

[1] *Arts and Crafts*, pl. 128.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

[3] Griffith's *Ajanta*; Plate 39.—Yazdani's *Ajanta.*

[4] From Griffith's *Ajanta* we see houses and city gateways festooned and garlanded with flowers and ornaments. cf. the 'dance party' opp.

with designs that are more often floral than geometrical, and also include animal and figure subjects (Fig. 145-146).[1] This wood-work was often coloured to match the general scheme of the walls and ceiling as well as the floor, which also received its due share of attention

Ceilings of Ancient Indian temples are intricate and amazingly ornate. Some of these ornate structures are illustrated by us. The ceilings from Dilwara, Konarak, and the South Indian shrines baffle the senses with their intricacy of design, minute yet superb craftsmanship, and deft proportions. The ceilings and pillars of the *Vihara* and verandah of Cave No. II at Ajanta are studded with paintings of floral designs of various shades and hues intermingled with several animal and bird *motifs*, such as monkey, swan, etc.[2] The most beautiful of these ceiling representations is the Shiva-Uma group in the corner of Cave II, where, as they are floating in the air, Shiva tells Uma something, which has brought on the maiden's face a bewitching expression of innocent wonder.

Hence we may with good reason suggest that ceilings of living houses were adorned with due care and attention, and offered as much scope both to the artist as well as to the lover of Art to satisfy their aesthetic sense. "Roofing" says Coomaraswamy "was often highly elaborate, both in structure and ornamentation, with carved rafters and beautiful pendants."[3]

Before we pass on to the interior decoration of a house, we may consider one more item, which will complete the exterior, namely the garden. The Indian love of colour and harmony was perceived even in the choice of the site for monasteries by the recluse Monks. In individual gardens, with a soil as fertile as the Indian, the love was supremely gratified.

It appears there were several types of gardens in Aryavarta. Perhaps the oldest were the groves surrounding the ancient hermitages. We would in modern times call them parks perhaps. We have already described these when dealing with these hermitages. Next there appear to be public gardens or parks round temples, baths, gambling houses, theatres and public houses.

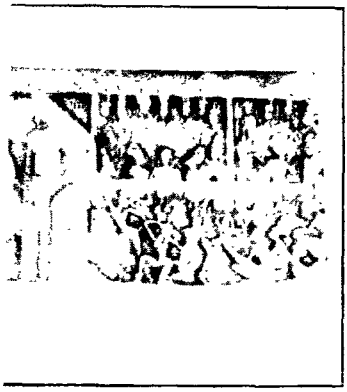
Gardens round palaces and private houses form a group by themselves. Some rich nobles even had their own orchards.

Gardening did not merely mean flower-growing, for, we find

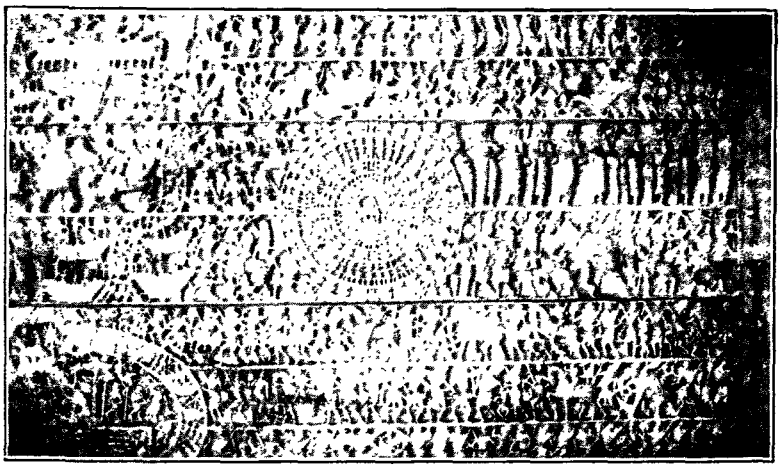
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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 165.
[2] Especial attention is drawn to Plates 92-96 from Griffith's *Ajanta*.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

PLATE LI.



(a) A house, sculptured at Sanchi



(b) Ceiling from Dilawar Mt. Abu

(c) This sculptured pattern may suggest what the entrance to an ancient Indian dwelling looked like

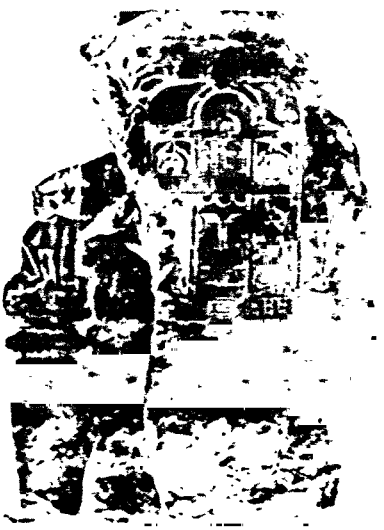
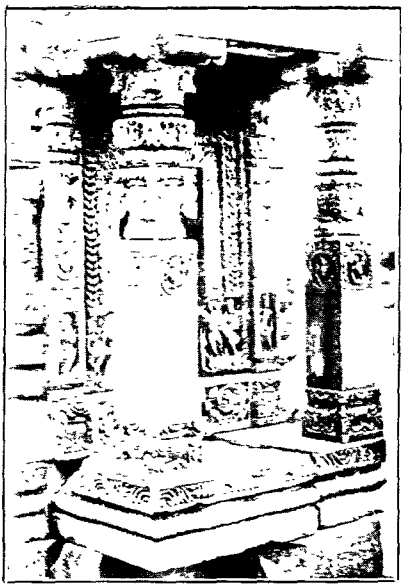


PLATE LII.

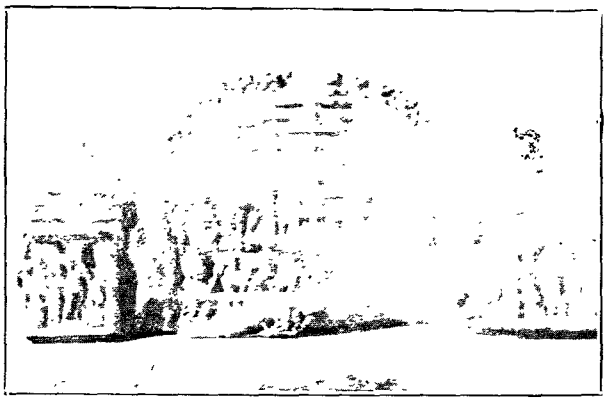
PORCHES, GATEWAYS, LINTELS AND PILLARS



OSIA PORCH FROM TEMPLE OF HARIHARA



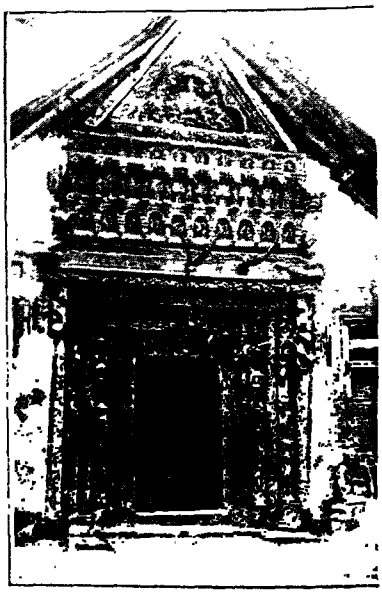
DOOR FRAME: DAH PARBATIYA DANAS TEMPLE OF SHIVA



A LINTEL FROM SARNATH



AN ORNATE PILLAR AND CAPITAL



ANOTHER ELABORATE GATEWAY

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

gardens were planned, laid, and cultivated according to well thought out schemes. Accessories, such as fountains, ponds, tanks, pillars, pedestals, ferneries, aviaries, were all used to embellish the place. Horticulture and grafting seems to have been known and new and unique specimens of flowers of innumerable hues and perfumes were cultivated.

What a spectacle these gardens presented! In fact their whole nature and extent are revealed in the literature of the times, and by our constant ally, the frescoes of Ajanta. About the earliest description of a garden is from Megasthenes. Pataliputra, with its splendid fortification of 570 towers seems to have baffled this keen observer. This is how he described the garden :

> "The palace, which was built chiefly of wood, excelled in its splendour the palaces of Ekbatana and Susa. It stood in an extensive park, filled with flowering trees and shrubs containing many fish-ponds. There were shady groves and trees set in clumps, forming bowers with their branches interwoven by some especial cunning of the gardeners..... There are birds there free and unconfined, nesting in branches, birds of all kinds besides the parrots that are kept there and wheel in bevies round the king's person..... There are lovely artificial tanks with fishes in them, very large and quite tame."[1]

For another very living description of a garden we turn to the garden of "the pride of all Ujjaini", the peerless Vasantasena. Two courts out of the eight of that spacious abode formed the garden proper. Birds of every description, peacocks, doves, parrots, cuckoos, flamingos, cranes, pigeons, thrushes, all nestled somewhere within the leafy foliage, billing and cooing, as their heart overflowed in the happiness their rapturous melody awakened even in the rusted brahmin Maitreya, who does not hesitate to compare it to Indra's Paradise.[2] The trees, the pond, the fishes, the jasmine, *shephalika, navamalika* etc. strewn the paths with their fallen blossoms, and adorn the garden so as to make "Indra's heaven look dungy!"

Equally enchanting is the description of a nobleman's garden in fair Ujjaini, as enshrined in the flowery language of *Megha-Duta*. The *Yaksha's* garden is indeed an aristocratic affair. Its large grounds contain, several well laid avenues where the clustering *Madhavi* and *Curuvaca* wreath and intertwine ; a shady plantain grove ; and a lake, bordered by artificial mounds, where in the limpid waters the swans bask in the midday sun. Then there is a foun-

[1] Ælian Nat Amin, XIII, 18 from *Ancient India*—Codrington, p. 14.
[2] Sudraka: *Toy Cart*—Tr. Ryder, pp. 68-73.

tain reached by emerald steps, with golden columns surrounding it; on a crystal base begirt with jewels, a blue peacock rests.[1]

On the walls and ceiling of Ajanta we get several glimpses of gardens and parks.[2] Flowers and floral designs form the back ground of so much of the Art, both in stone and paint;[3] hence, their influence on life and Art speaks for itself without further comment.

Now we will glance inside an ancient Indian abode. Once more we will have to resort to Ajanta. The plan we have already observed is the same as that of a *Vihara*—one central courtyard with rooms surrounding it. The walls were in most elaborate abodes frescoed. There were nitches in the walls, some of which were ornamental, and held sculptured images, and others served the same purpose as our brackets.

Furniture. Furniture, in the modern sense of the word,—sofas, chairs, tables etc.,—was hardly known in Ancient India. The main furniture in an Ancient Indian home consisted of a few bedsteads, raised *divans*, and sometimes benches used in the courtyard and gardens, all made of wood.[4] In the richer dwellings, perhaps, more expensive material such as marble was used. In the royal palaces, the throne was naturally the most ornate, usually made of gold, inlaid with jewels and precious stones. Besides these, there were royal chairs used by kings, which were hardly less ornate.[5] Bedsteads, or *charpais* as they are called, consisted of a low wooden frame, supported on four legs, made in various designs and intricately carved, inlaid or lacquered, added to the elegance of the daintily frescoed designs on the surrounding walls and ceiling. In one of the frescoes at Ajanta we have Buddha's wife sleeping on one of these bedsteads.[6] How elegantly the posts are carved, and shaped, how exquisitely decorated! Receptacles for clothes and other belongings,—which make up so great a portion of modern household furniture—were usually contrived in the walls of the houses. A close examination of the frescoe will reveal this; as also many an old-fashioned building in ancient towns still surviving will indicate.

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[1] Kalidasa: *Megha-Duta*—Tr. Wilson, pp. 82-86.

[2] Griffith's *Ajanta*—Plates 6, 7, 38, 39.

[3] (a) *Ibid.*, 92-96, 42, 17.
(b) Background of sculpture at Sanchi, Bharhut and Borobhudur.

[4]&[5] Griffith's *Ajanta*: Pls. Iranian Embassy, 5. Observe throne, carpet—Yazdani *Ajanta*, Pl. XL.

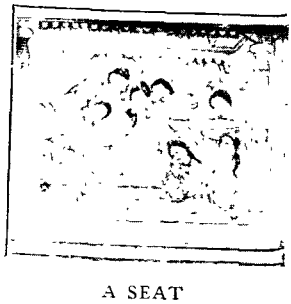
[6] *Ibid.*, Pl. 48. Notice bedstead, cushions; the suggestions of frescoed walls and the nitches which hold receptacles, and the shelves.

PLATE LIII.

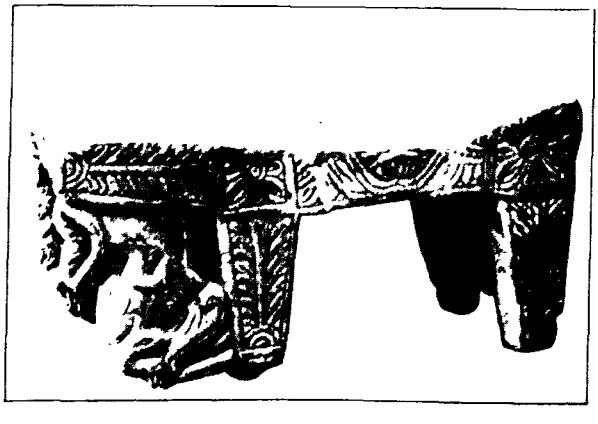


A bedroom at Ajanta Observe the furniture, wall, decoration and architecture of this room.

GRIFFITH'S (AJANTA)



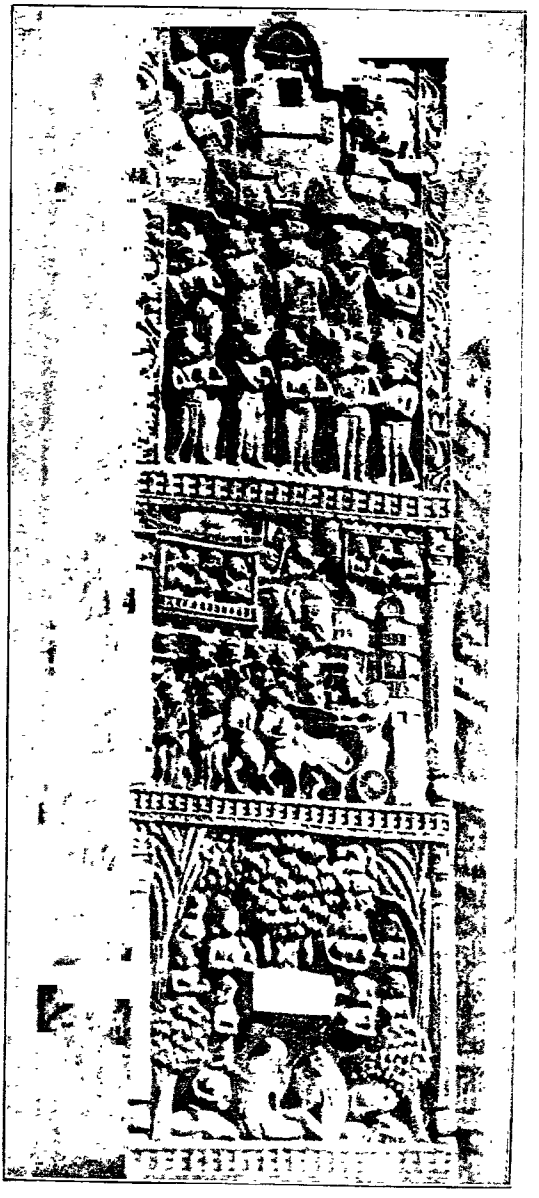
A SEAT



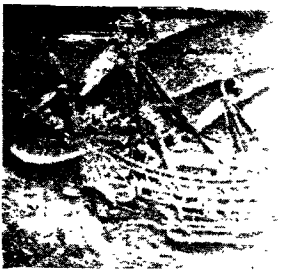
A CHARPAI

PLATE LIV.

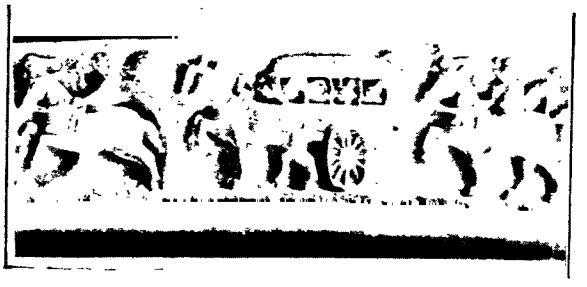
MODES OF CONVEYANCE



OBSERVE THE CHARIOT ON THE SECOND PANEL



A SHIP FROM BOROBUDUR



ANOTHER FORM OF A CARRIAGE

The floors, when not tiled or inlaid, were covered with carpets or *daris*, of various shades, embroidery and designs.[1] On these *daris* were placed big cylindrical cushions, on which very probably the women of the house exercised their skill at ornamentation.[2] All other business was done on the ground—but hardly ever bare ground, for even the rishis used deer-skins. At Ajanta, one often espies a seat akin to the raised daised throne of the Moghuls, on which are seen princes and princesses, resting.[3] A swing, which appears to be a necessity in an Indian home from medieval pictures, is hardly visible either in sculpture or paint, though it makes its appearance in Vasantasena's orchard.[4]

The modes of transport in those days were : for Kings and warriors, chariots, horses, and elephants ; and for the ordinary people carts and carriages drawn by bullocks. The ladies often used a mode similar to the *palkhis* or *dandis* of later times. All those who could afford it had these luxuries, even as we have our automobiles. Some of these carts, especially those used by royalty and rich folks, could not have missed their share of decoration from a people so keen on effect as the ancient Indians.[5] The carts in which the Gods were driven on holidays and festivals were elaborate structures, literally covered with mythological carvings, drawn by white bulls or elephants. The trappings of these elephants and bulls will be discussed when considering the topic of jewellery.

Vessels-Sacrificial and Household.

The vessels used for sacrifice as well as for domestic purposes, were usually made of metal.

> "The Indian knowledge of metallurgy is both wide and ancient. The famous iron pillar of Chandragupta II at Delhi shows that already in the 5th Century A. D. the Indians were able to forge masses of iron, larger than any which European foundries could deal with before the latter part of the 19th Century."[6]

The Art of preparing steel was also well known. Metals were sometimes inlaid with gold and silver threads, lead or tin. Brass and copper were the favourites for domestic use. The richer folks used silver, inlaid or incised wares, which were very expen-

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[1, 2 & 3] Persian Embassy Frescoe; and the dying Princess.

[4] Sudraka: *Toy Cart*—Tr. Ryder, p. 72. "Silken swings are hung under the thick-set trees, just big enough for a girl to sit in."

[5] The fragments of a chariot at the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, shows this characteristic to a marked degree. It is a pity we have no picture of the whole.

[6] *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 37.

sive. Brass comes in about the 11th Century ;[1] hence, in Ancient India, copper must have been more popular.

What is particularly striking about these vessels is the elegance of their shape and design. It must not be forgotten that unlike our modern vessels, these were not made by machines, but by hand; hence, each shape and design, when new, must have been the work of an artist. The vessels that were used in ritual were especially elaborate, and had their particular measurements which had to be adhered to.

> "It should be made without hole or crack. In its making all miserliness should be avoided, since it is fashioned for the pleasure of the Devas."[2]

Some of these were the temple lamps, trays, ceremonial spoons, and the *surahis* i. e. special vessels for holding Ganges water. The temple lamps were in various forms, there were the standing lamps in form of a branching tree, each branch landing in a little bowl for oil and wick. Sometimes they were suspended by chains. At times figures of men and women were used holding bowls in their hands in which was the oil and the wick. Flowers, such as the lotus or jasmine, made to close or open, held within their centre little bowls for oil and wicks, or for camphor, thus forming a new variety of lamps, a collection of which must have made the lighting artistic as well as effective.[3]

Trays used for offerings must have been similar to the ones found in the Sigiriya frescoes at Ceylon. They held offerings of rice, fruits and flowers, that had to be served to the household gods each morning. They were either inlaid or engraved, in gold or silver or brass or copper, according to the wealth of the owner. But the designing was always necessary, for the shastras recommended no miserliness where the vessels of the devas were concerned.

Domestic Vessels.

Domestic brass, says Coomaraswamy, is the glory of a Hindu kitchen. It consisted of *lotas*, *surahis*, and plates and dishes for service, jugs for pouring water or milk, bowls for drinking and vessels for cooking. The shapes of all these are too varied to describe, but from the illustrations the reader may have a slight idea as to their appearance and artistic

[1] *Ibid.*,

[2] *Arts and Crafts*, p. 141.

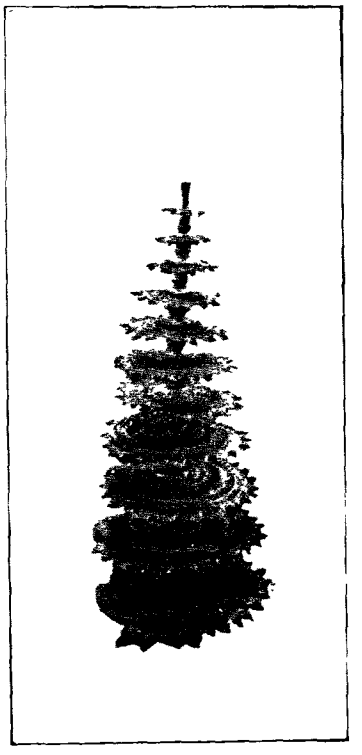
[3] The little Elephant lamp from Jogeshwari is a clever and neat contrivance. The elephant's body is the oil holder. Below it was a lamp contrivance. In one of the legs of the animal is an outlet for the oil which passed into the lamp.

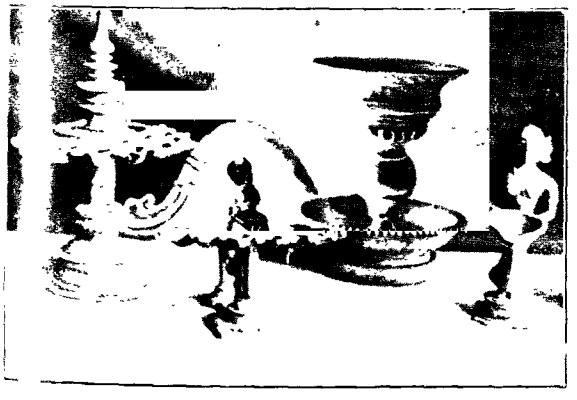
PLATE LV.

LAMPS THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN USED IN ANCIENT INDIA

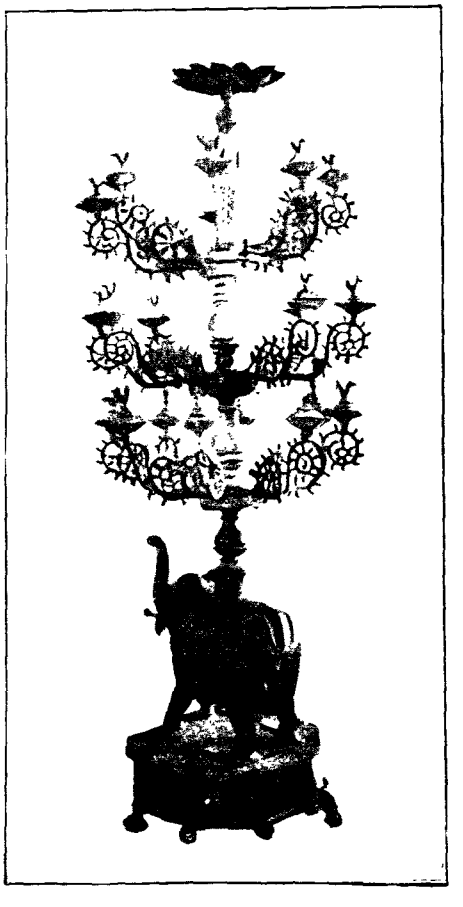


Image stands for household images





of the modes in which the problem of lighting was tackled. Candles and wicks dipped in oil or ghee were used.



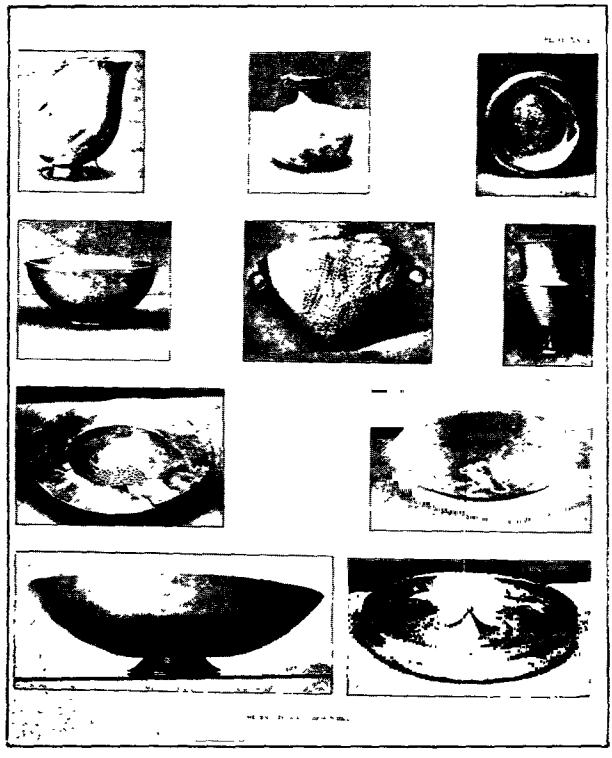


An attractive lamp from Jogeshwari.

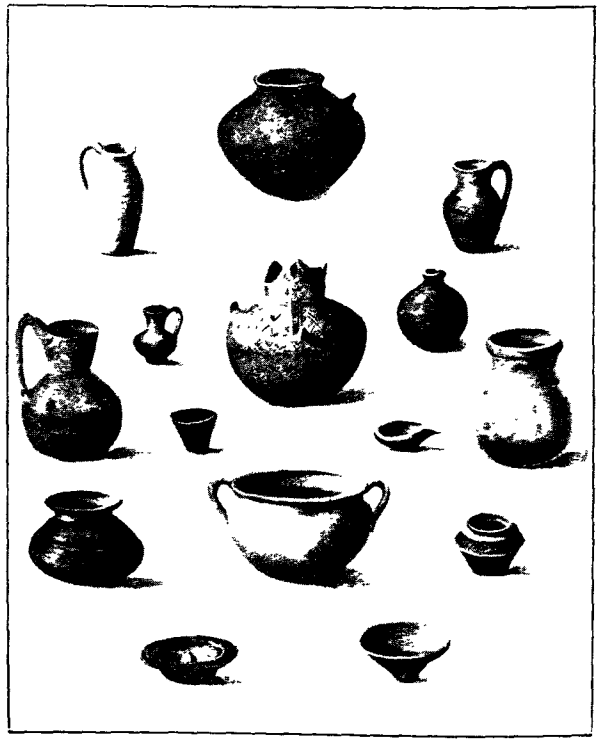
(Courtesy Prince of Wales Museum Bombay.)

PLATE LVI.

DOMESTIC VESSELS



Metal Vessels from Sirkap.



Earthernware Vessels.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

value. As these were for domestic purposes, and therefore cleaning must have been a daily necessity, the designs used were "incised, or quite flat in crustation".[1]

Bidri[2] work is another effective incrustation combined with wire inlay on a black ground, of an alloy of zinc, lead and tin. The effect is of silver and black, very beautiful to look at. Dishes, basins and pandans were generally in this work ; and popular among the well-to-do. It has still survived in certain parts of India where it is to be seen.

Work on ivory was another popular and artistic though expensive form of ornamentation. We have descriptions of jambs and lintels of *Vihara* doorways,[3] handles of daggers and knives, and of water dippers, combs, trinkets, boxes, book covers[4] all carved from ivory. Images also were made from ivory. In medieval India, at Vijayanagar, was a room,

> "with pillars of carved stone. This room is all of ivory, as well as the chamber, as the walls from top to bottom and the pillars of the cross timbers, at the top had roses, and flowers of lotus, all of ivory, and all well executed. To that there could not be better—it is so rich and beautiful that you could hardly find anywhere another such."[5]

This, though in a Hindu Kingdom in medieval India, may have had its counterpart in ancient India, for there are references in literature to ivory carving, used for architectural as well as ornamental purposes. In the *Toy Cart*,[6] composed by King Shudraka, there is a mention of the high ivory portals of the Courtesan's house. Ivory puppets are mentioned in the *Kamasutra*, and the *Mahavamsa* in the 12th Century speaks of a royal park in Ceylon railed with ivory pillars decorated with rows of images made of ivory.[7] So we may presume that ivory carving has been flourishing in Indian Art from early times,[8] and all the beautiful carving in ivory that is still done is really of unbroken descent from the most ancient traditions.

[1] For illustrations, *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, Dr. Coomaraswamy, pp. 142-145.

[2] Very beautiful examples of this are available sometimes at 'Svadeshi' in Bombay. "It is however an *Old Hindoo Art*, taking its name Bidar in the Deccan. *Arts and Crafts*, pp. 139-143.

[3] *Ibid.*, Vasantasena's doorway had ivory portals.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 175.

[6] P. 67.

[7] *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon*, p. 175. At Mohenjodaro we find ivory objects too.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

Besides the household vessels made of metal, silver, or ivory, were also those made of earthenware.

> "The inglazed earthenware, on the contrary, all over India, is of the remotest antiquity in form and technique unaltered since pre-historic times. The forms are of explicit simplicity and dignity while the decorative ornament, especially in Ceylon, is of great interest as preserving many archaic motifs."[1]

These earthenwares were used mostly for carrying water,[2] for storing grain and spices, and even clothing, as also for cooking. Besides these are also found roof tiles, finials, lamps, and lamp-stands. The modes of decoration of these are either paint, or incised and stamped design ornaments.[3] Some of these designs, especially those of the bow-leaf, are of very archaic type.

From these description we may conclude, that the home and surroundings of an ancient Indian were no wise lacking in artistry. In fact all that he saw round him, all that he used, was moulded and fashioned by human hands, and by men who enjoyed their work, and who lovingly worked each piece to the best of their ability. For work to them was no drudgery, but one of the modes of self-expression.

Life of an Average Indian.

Under the influence of these surroundings, how did an ancient Indian spend his life? How far did true artistry penetrate the daily routine of life? The life of an average Indian, according to his *shastras*, is divided into four main *Ashramas* ; namely, that of childhood and studenthood ; manhood and marriage or householdship ; the recluse and hermit stage ; and, the final stage of complete renunciation in form of a *Sanyasi*.

The Childhood was spent in watching the household activities, and learning the daily routine in the surroundings described above. These activities consisted mainly of religious worship, and offerings to the household gods. The necessary ritual for some of these ceremonies consisted of chants, or music and singing. At times, on particular occasions, there was the adorning of the doorsteps by

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 186. Earthenware, pottery glazed and unglazed, painted and plain have been unearthed in the Indus Valley, where without the least doubt the craft was highly cultivated.

[2] Griffith's *Ajanta*—Bath Scene, Pl. 7. Observe carefully the earthenware used.

[3] *Arts and Crafts*, p. 187.

drawing of certain pictures by the women of the household, and dancing.[1]

Certain castes at present have certain peculiar ritual to be performed on particular occasions or festivals. These consists of drawing several pictures, either on the floor, or on the board prepared for the occasion. Mr. Gladstone Solomon, in his book on the *Charms of Indian Art*, has devoted a whole chapter to these festivals and their elaboration by the *Prabhus* in a very artistic manner. B. A. Gupta in his book on *Hindoo Holidays*, gives us a list of holidays on which these celebrations are undertaken. These holidays are sectarian, and hardly ever fall on the same day for the whole of India. Yet, on the days on which they fall for each sect, the celebrations are of the same kind, though the ceremonials may be different. The present in this regard may justly be considered to be a veritable replica of the past.

Each holiday or festival in ancient times must have given to those people an opportunity for extra artistic display. The decorations, especially the floral ones, were themselves a study. The *Kama-sutra* describes them as especial Arts, which every well accomplished girl should study.

These vivid scenes full of colour and enchantment, could not fail to leave their stamp on a child's mind. How far these childhood impressions of colour and harmony go to the making of the child is too well-known to us, in these days of study in infant psychology, and so need not be further enlarged upon. The children's class rooms, we are told, should be bright and airy, full of gay colouring and flowers and pictures. The ancient Indian homes appear to satisfy these conditions very well.

Brahmacharin Stage.

Any time after 6 to 16, a boy was placed under a tutor. Here he was trained and fitted to do his duty by himself, his neighbour, and his God. The effect of these sylvan retreats, where the early education of an Aryan child was usually imparted, as well as of the Universities, on the development of mind, we have already referred to, so we will proceed to the second or Householder's stage.

The education of a girl was conducted at home, but the artistic bend in a girl's training seems to have been even more more pronounced than in that of a boy. If the stories

[1] The adorning of the doorsteps exists to this very day. One has only to stir out of the house on great festival days, such as the Dashera and Depawli; to prove to oneself that this Art still survives.

in the *Dasha-Kumara-Charita, or Kadambari* are any guide ; if the injunctions of the *Kama-sutra* are any reflection of the conditions of life as they prevailed ; if the *Tales of a Parrot* are any indication of the degree of women's sophistication in Ancient India, there is no doubt that the Arts did play a great part in the curriculum of the education of the high bred dames of Aryavarta. Malvika is an accomplished dancer, and the Yaksha's wife in *Megha-duta*[1] is a musician and a painter, a lover of birds and flowers, a judge of colours, presumably an arbiter of fashion too. No wonder, homes made of such people harboured Art, and maintained taste on a high level.

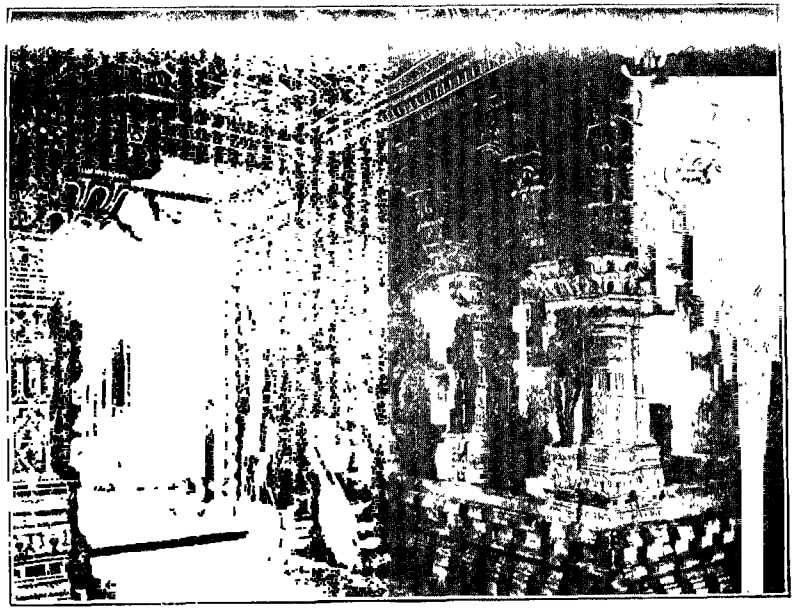
Householder's Stage.

Having qualified himself as a citizen, a young man's next duty was to himself, and incidentally to his fellows, and to society and the State. He had to find a suitable bride for himself, and whilst doing so, bear in mind all the recommendations of the Shastras regarding the qualifications of a bride. Music, dancing, dress, ornaments, all forms of Arts and crafts graced this threshold into manhood.

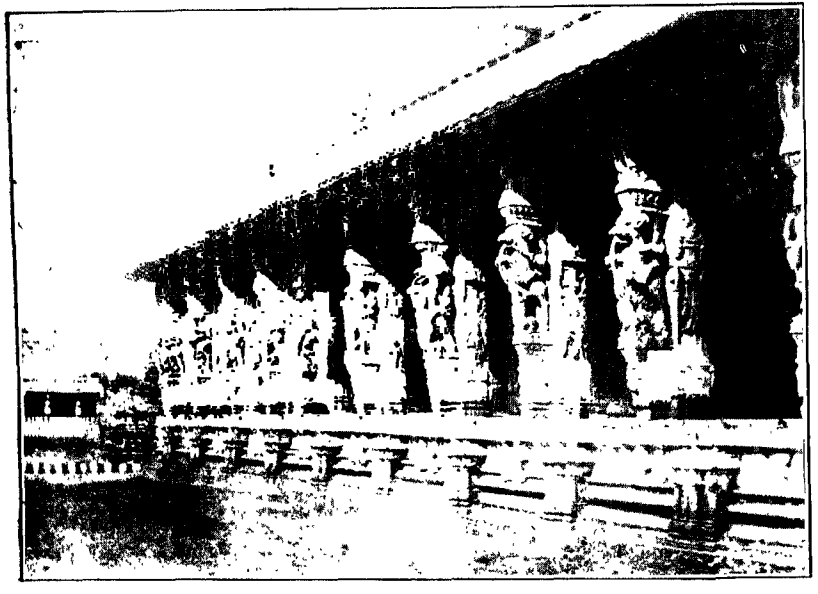
Occupations and Amusements of a Householder.

As a married man, his home and his vocation may have taken up most of his time. But was there no sort of a public life a man cultivated in Ancient India? There was, but not in the Greek sense of the word. For the Greek, his public life absorbed most of his time, hardly leaving him any for his home. His private work in the house or on the field was done by his slaves. He lunched and dined out at his mess ; his public duties and daily worship took him away from his home. Such was not the case in Ancient India. The integrity and value of a true family life was known and favoured. Democracy, though known in the Village, did not cover the wide areas of an Aryan kingdom. Royalty reigned, Aristocracies governed, and the social fabric was so constructed that the normal work of a citizen became part and parcel of public service. Besides, the main fabric of society was supposed to be eternal, incapable of alteration by human action or laws. Hence the ancient Indian had no public life like the Greek, in the sense of a political life. Apart, however, from politics, the public life of an ancient Indian generally centred round the temples, assembly halls, game-houses, and public baths in the town. In the villages, it flowed round the wells, and assembly halls, or the village common or meet-

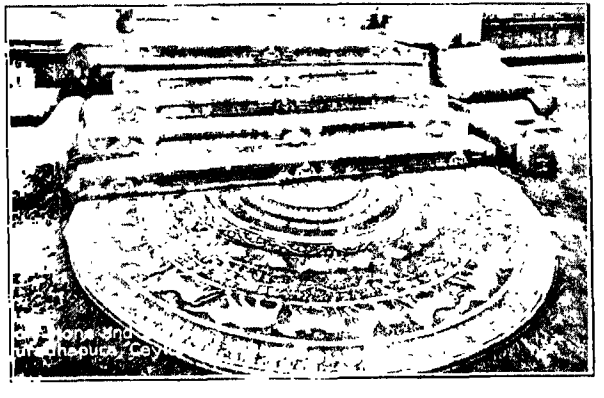
[1] *Megha-duta*—Tr. Ryder, pp. 92-96.



(a) The Corrider at Rameshwaram



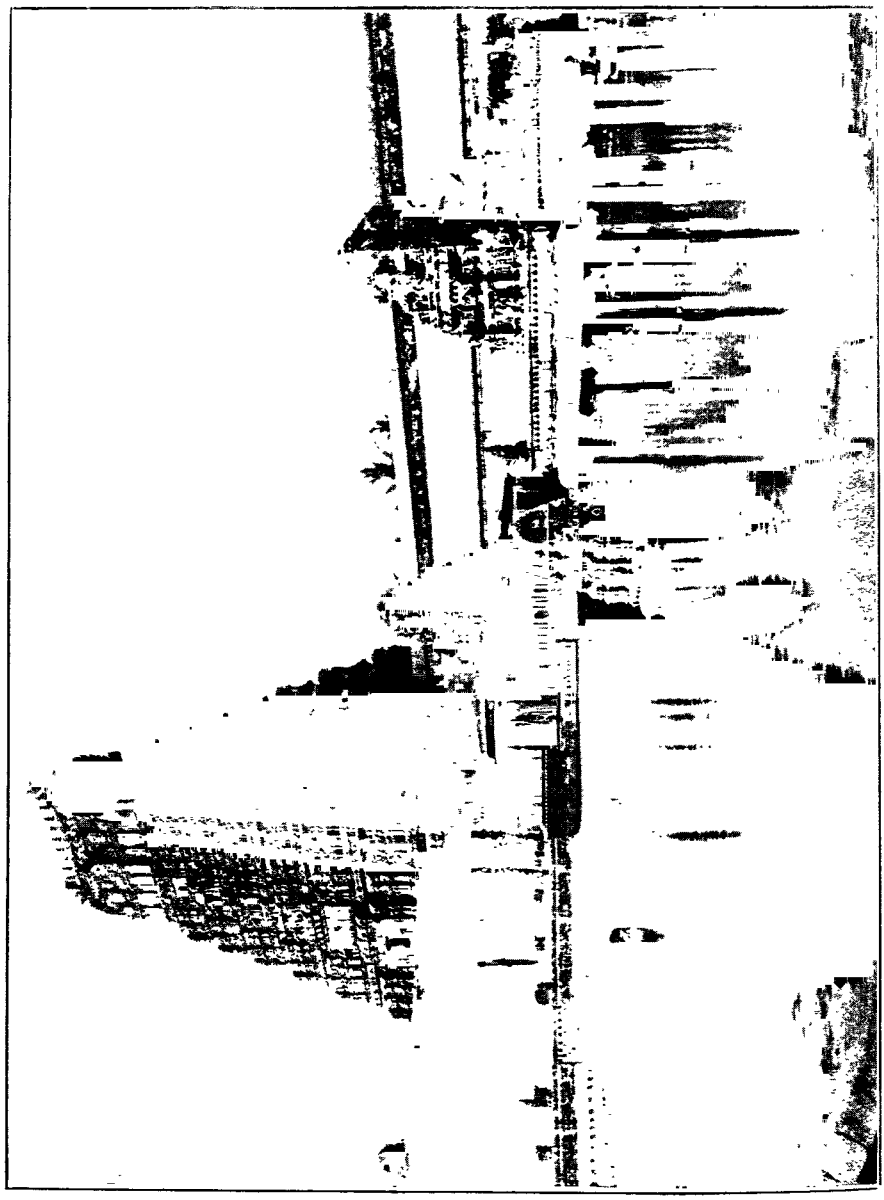
(c) The Hall of a hundred pillars Rameshwaram



(b) Steps leading to a bath Anuradhapuram

PLATE LVII.

PLATE LVIII.



ing place, often under the enveloping shadow and rich foliage of an ancient tree.

The *Mandapams* of Hindu temples, and the assembly halls of the Buddhist monasteries, were very elaborately decorated. Here the people gathered together to hear tales of gods and heroes, discourses by sages and disputations on philosophical themes by scholars. Travellers told their tales of wonder, of strange peoples and their stranger customs

> "Discussions on philosophical and religious questions have been, from the earliest times, so much a part of Indian social and political life, that every village had its debating hall, if only a temporary *pandal* of bamboo and matting, or a venerable tree of wisdom,—a Banyan or a pipal—under whose branches the elders gathered in the evening to listen to wandering sadhus or disciples of a great teacher, travelling from toll to toll or court to court."[1]

> "Sometimes the temple *mandapams*—were like forest groves of a thousand pillars. Whatever might have been the use to which the *mandapam* was applied, a debating hall or royal audience hall, a Town hall, a parliament house; a pilgrim's hostel, or place for religious ceremony, the mystery of the primeval forest seems to hang over it. The Indian craftsman's inexhaustible invention and boundless patience reveled in task of giving artistic expression to the exuberant beauty of the tropical forest."[2]

Gambling houses were generally attached to palaces[3] and open to all men; if separate, they were established under the King's orders,[4] as in the *Toy Cart*. Gambling was done with dice, on a board with thirty-six squares. On a page of Rhys David's book is reproduced the only picture available of such a sport.[5] It appears as though it is in the open air, and forms part of a relief from the Bharhut Stupa. From the *Toy Cart* we learn that it was visited by all kinds of people from the town, and hence must have been well adorned, and very probably sculpture and painting were lavished on its wall, pillars and ceiling. It would not be surprising if music accompanied the game of dice, as it certainly did in Vasantasena's splendid abode, where she received the gaymen of Ujjaini in public court, furnished with gaming tables, books, pictures and music.[6]

Public baths, both secular and religious, existed. Built in great cities for popular use, or in connection with temples,

[1] Havel: *Handbook of Indian Art*, p. 94.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 95.
[3] Rhys David: *Buddhist India*, p. 72.
[4] Dutt: *History of Civilisation of Ancient India*, Vol. III, p. 469.
[5] Rhys David: *Buddhist India*, p. 71.
[6] Dutt: *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, p. 464.

they formed in either case the chief centre of communal life. Rich floral designs generally adorned the walls, and the whole appearance is marked with a keen sense of proportion, and a wonderful elegance of detail.

Secular baths were either private or public, hot or cold. Hot baths on the principle of modern Turkish bath seem to have been known in Ancient India. R. Davids gives us a description of one.[1]

> "There was an ante-chamber and a hot-room, and a pool to bathe in. Seats were arranged round a fine place in the middle of the hot room, to induce perspiration; hot water was poured over the bathers whose faces were covered with scented chunam. After the bath there was shampooing, and then a plunge into the pool."[2]

This is very probably the description of a private hot bath.

We have information of another sort of bath, also very probably a public bath, with an open air bathing tank, with flights of steps, leading down to it, "faced entirely of stone, and ornamented with flowers and carving."[3] At Anuradhapuram in Ceylon, some of these baths still exist. Our illustration of the bath steps is from these and bears evidence to the elegant simplicity of the style.

Quite a number of temples in India have even nowadays bathing tanks attached to them, which are as richly ornamented as the temples. By means of this profuse ornamentation, or sermons in stone, the people were constantly reminded of their religion and ideals. The eye was trained to look for beauty in all surroundings, and the mind, nourished on such delicacies, gave to the whole character and outlook that refinement, so accurately translated into the Art creations of the times. Besides these were the famous bathing *ghats*, in sacred cities, on holy river banks, such as those at Benares or Nasik. These *ghats*, with their majestic flights of steps, colourful gardens, enchanting foliage, and beautiful temples raised on the banks, are, once seen, impossible ever to forget. To these great places of pilgrimage flock devotees from all over Hindoostan, and very few places could have greater opportunities of being such cultural centres as these *ghats*. Of these Dr. Coomaraswamy says—

> "Where noble building combines with a perpetuation of the life of ancient India, to form one of the most wonderful spectacles the world can still present."[4]

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[1] The excavations at Mohenjodaro reveal a similar bath—cf. introduction. Marshall *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Valley Civilisation.*

[2] *Vinaya Text*, III, 105-110, 297 from Rhys David, 74.

[3] Rhys David: *Buddhist India*, p. 74.

[4] *Arts and Crafts*, p. 117.

Over and above their home lives, the places where their public life was spent, were also, then, for the ancient Indians, full of beauty. The *mandapams*, the assembly halls, the bathing places and the gambling houses, parks and gardens—each offered opportunities both to the artist and the lover of Art.

Amusements. The games, amusements, or recreations in Ancient India offered further opportunities for the cultivation of Art. The amusements of the common people differed from those of the Kings and Courtiers. It is with the amusements of the ordinary folks that we are concerned here. During the Vedic days, great public sacrifices must have been the main source of popular enjoyment. Later, seasonal festivals, such as *Vasantotsava* or Spring festival, *Dashera*, *Deepawli*, the Fullmoon festivals, those connected with the cults of each particular deity, all grew, and with them grew the number of days for rejoicing There were also private festivals, e.g. hair-cutting ceremony of a son, or his *Upanayana*, or initiation, not to mention marriage,—which must have offered immense opportunity for rejoicing. In most of these festivals, whether public or private, men and women joined in equal numbers,—men lending the vigour, women the grace and colour and charm for the occasion, a keener appreciation of the beautiful and the harmonious, a juster sense of proportion and fitness,—all helping directly to inculcate the spirit of artistry and the practice of Art, in no mean measure.

Krishna and Radha, or Krishna and the Gopis playing at Holi, is a favourite theme even amongst modern Indian artists, and has been rendered very beautifully by some. Except in the Ajanta frescoes, which are Buddhist, we have no remains of Indian painting, or we would very likely have been able to see similar festivals actually represented. Harsha's drama *Ratnavali* opens with an account of the Spring festival, when the God of Love was worshipped, and coloured water was showered by many men and mirthful ladies on each other. [1]

Music and dancing were amusements of a very refined character, commonly practised by the women. Not only were these amusements, but they had become very popular accomplishments, as was shown whilst discussing the position of women in Ancient India. Princesses and noble ladies were especially taught these Arts, so that the disfavour attached to dancing seems not to have been known at this period. From the *Naganauda*, while discussing

[1] Dutt: *Civilisation of Ancient India*, Vol. III, p. 407.

early "Puranic Civilisation" and from the *Katha Sarit Sagara* (Chapter IX), Dutt gives us two examples of princesses, the one being 'Malyavati'

> "who sang a song possessing the treble and bass notes duly developed, and played with her fingers keeping good time, both slow and fast. Princess Mrigavati, we are told, attained wonderful skill in dancing, singing and other accomplishments before her marriage."[1]

Dancing then was also considered a high accomplishment and duly practised in its classical form. But this was just the one aspect of the Art. The aspects in which it affected the lives of the people most were as a ritual necessity and in the form of folk dance. As Keith[2] points out, the Dance existed in India long before the drama. Its importance is well brought out in the following passage—

> "Thus at the Mahavrata, Maidens danced round the fire, as a spell to bring down rain and to secure the prosperity of the herd. Before the marriage ceremony is completed, there is a dance of matrons, whose husbands are still alive. When a death takes place, the ashes of the deceased are collected, and the mourners move round the vase, which contains the last relics of the dead; and dancers are present, who dance to the sound of the lute and flute; dance, music and song fill the whole day of mourning."

The Dance was thus a necessary adjunct to every ceremony and festival held, and where there was dance there was music too.

The next important branch by which Art entered daily life was through the domain of Folk Music and Dancing. *Sangita*, Indian Musical theory tells us, is divided into *Marga* and *Deci*.[3] That which is conceived by Brahma and performed by Bharata in the presence of Mahadeva is called *Marga*, bestowing liberation. That music, which in different countries serves for enjoyment of the people according to the custom of the country, is called *deci*. In and through this music, the people of a country express themselves. Their simple innocent pleasures, troubles, hopes, all live in this alluring department of music. It is because the soul of the people radiates through this folk music that it is necessary especially to mention it here. Not only is the music haunting, but the words and sentiments clothed in rustic imagery are of exquisite charm.

Each province in Hindoostan is brimming over with treasures of this description ; but so far a Cecil Sharp has not been found to

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 461.
[2] Keith: *Sanskrit Drama*, pp. 25-26.
[3] *Damodara Sangitdarpana*, pp. 1-4.

collect and systematise them. In Bengal only, the Bengali Folk songs,—such as those of the boatmen, fishermen, reapers, washer-women, builders etc.,—have come to light. The music of some of them just fills one with delight. Mrs. Wilson says it was a wandering bard who goes about with a double string instrument that awakened her to Indian music.

The words in these folk songs lend themselves exquisitely to the tune both in meaning and sentiment.

> "One can say that the Indian folk music is the voice of the mystic and metaphysical conscience of the people."[1]

They give voice to the religious consciousness of the people in its widest sense. A little boatmen's song given by Fox Strangway in his elaborate treatise will illustrate this trait perfectly.

> "Thou art my tiny bundle of old torn rags,
> My dearest Lord; and I am thine own little
> mad woman holding thee always to my heart.
> When I am tired, I lay myself down under the tree by the river side,
> and sleep in peace resting my head on thy bosom.
> In the streets men point the finger of scorn at me, they laugh at me,
> they throw dust on me.
> Some try to pluck thee from my heart,
> Some tell me to cast thee away,
> Ah! but how could thy mad woman live
> without thee, my love!
> Pressing thee to my breast I go on my way,
> and neither fear nor falter;
> This mad mind of mine cannot be touched by
> any troubled thoughts.
> Long long years have come and gone, but thou art still the
> one sweet thing that never grows old.
> With what talisman holdest thou this mad, mad soul of mine, my
> love."[2]

For other similar instances one has but to turn to one's own village or province to find innumerable example.

In Gujarat we have the *Garba* and the *Ras*, supposed to be sung and danced together by the village boys and girls, on festive occasion, or on holiday, or as an evening entertainment for themselves. They depict just the sheer joy of life; and in theme deal with just village life, signifying it by actions such as drawing water from a well, or watering plants etc.

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[1] Arnold A. Bake: *Lectures on Indian Music*, p. 5.
[2] Fox Strangways: *The Music of Hindoostan*, p. 7.

Ras is just a musical drill, with words and music, done by means of sticks that click together as the movements require. How intoxicating and infective they are one has only to behold to feel ; whilst observing there is an intense desire to participate.

How old these are we do not know ; but they seem to have been evolved from ancient days, and naturally played a more important part in bringing Art within the village home than any other Art perhaps. At Bharhut we have something very much like a *Ras* sculptured, as the illustration opposite will show.

Local folk dances, such as the ones Krishna performed with the Gopis in the green glades of Brandaban, must have been very popular in villages, for we see them still the favourites of the common folk. Both these, being of local origin and from folk-life, must have affected the lives of the masses in general more than the classical music or dancing, for in the other they must have constituted the spectators only. But when the women of the house were themselves able to perform, as we are led to believe from the authorities quoted, these classic dances and songs even must have been brought nearer the hearth and influenced the life around it.[1]

Drama and dramatic performances were another form of popular amusement. It is said by some writers that the Drama was not a popular form of amusement, but was meant only for the cultured who were able to understand Sanskrit, and the subtle beauties of the highly sophisticated Sanskrit dramaturgy. It is because of this select and cultured patronage, that the drama as an Art was able to attain the level it did, and has survived, when all the popular forms of the drama and farces have disappeared, while only the *Nataka* has survived.

In opposition to the above, we have the following statements. The drama (i.e. its mythological origin) came into existence because the folks of Kailasa desired a form of enjoyment in which all could participate, as the *Vedas* were not open to the *Sudras*. In accordance with this demand was the drama created, so that all could learn from it the triumph of good, as well as enjoy themselves at the same time. We are told dramas were often performed on

[1] Besides the two types of folk dances already referred to, there must have been others. It is a pity, however, that we have no record of them. Every province very probably had its particular style, and perhaps still has. These may be collected and formalised in the manner in which Mr. Cecil Sharp has collected the English folk dances and songs for the benefit of all, if an energetic enough person can be found.

festival days, or to celebrate a victory, i.e. on days of public rejoicing. It follows that all who would could participate in the enjoyment. Sometimes they were performed in temple *mandapams*, necessarily open to the public, or in the common assembly halls, where the public could have every access.

From the instructions given regarding the construction of a playhouse, we find there is a definite allocation of seats for all the four classes, and, we also have references to various members of all the castes being present. Of course, the dramas were in Sanskrit ; but, it must not be forgotten that there was a time when Sanskrit was a common language, and if not spoken, at least understood by everybody. Though the women and the servants were made to use a different dialect in the drama, which very probably they did in real life too, yet they may have spoken Sanskrit too. For Maitreya in the *Toy Cart* tells us that two things that particularly amused him are to hear women talk Sanskrit, and men sing. So women talking Sanskrit could not be a very unusual phenomenon, though they generally talked their own dialect such as *Prakrit* or *Magadhi*. Vasantasena speaks Sanskrit.[1] Women, of course, of the rank and learning of Arundhati in *Uttara Rama Charita*, or the Nun in *Malavika-Agnimitra*, for instance, naturally talk in Sanskrit, and so earn once again, as it were, the noble compliment, the princely salutation, the high bred greeting of Janaka.

> "I salute thee, gracious lady, salutable by the whole world as the Dawn."

On the other hand, Sita, Shakuntala, Malavika, Ratnavali—all talk Prakrit,—the vulgar dialect of the lower orders. Perhaps it was the same as women in modern Indian homes, who understand the English language, but do not attempt to talk it. Besides, the themes of the dramas were familiar to all. Even if the people could not understand some parts that were in Sanskrit, as perhaps we do not the Italian Operas we hear, yet, the familiarity of the theme, as well as the *prakrit* spoken in parts brought the enjoyment of them within reach of everybody.

We cannot, therefore, agree with the writers who declare that the drama was not a public and popular form of enjoyment in Ancient India.[2] We think it was, just as it was in the other races derived

[1] Sudraka: *Toy Cart*—Tr. Ryder, p. 73.

[2] A popular legend, however, says that Kalidasa earned his wreath of eternal Laureate of Sanskrit drama and poetry over his famous rival Magha, by means which cannot but indicate the place of popular judgment in matters

from the same Aryan stock. The Greeks and the Romans both had public dramatic performances on great festive occasions, and so had the Ancient Indians. Among the Buddhists, we are told, the drama was employed, not as a means of enjoyment, but of instruction. That was how Buddhism looked on all forms of Art. Hence probably arose the idea that Art must have a purpose, and be not cultivated for its own sake. Had Art's appeal not been for the people in general, the Bhikshus would hardly have used it as a form of propaganda of their faith. Ashwagosha's dramas, we are told, were mainly written and performed with that motive, and so also in all probability those of Shri Harsha.

The modes of amusements of the Kings and Court hardly need to be described at length. The Royal Hunt was almost an institution in India. It has had its devotees from time immemorial, almost everywhere in the world. Besides that, every Royal court in Ancient India had its music halls and musicians, and troupes of dancers. For the improvement of these, as well as for the amusement of the royal household, public displays were often held. Appreciation was shown in the form of verbal praise, gifts of jewellery or other valuables, and increase of salary. The service was a life vocation ; and hence

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of Art. Magha was invited by King Vikrama to his court at Ujjain to meet his laureate in competition. Kalidas, sensing the great qualities of his rival's Art, begged and obtained leave to go as far as the frontiers of the Kingdom to welcome and escort the distinguished guest. They met near some border village; and Kalidas begged the guest, after the usual greetings, for some display of his work in the presence of the villagers, also gathered to offer their simple greetings. Magha courteously complied by a poem full of all the exquisite graces of a highly sophisticated Art that were met in stony silence by the gaping yokels. Then Kalidasa took his turn, and played down to the level of his audience,—and was rewarded by thundering cheers. Magha was bewildered, and concluded that the court of Vikrama must consist of Yokels, where such jingles could pass as poetry. Then the two poets went to court; and, on the day fixed for competition, Magha was given the right to begin, as the guest of the King. He gave a poem fit for cowherds to clap at and shepherds to mouth. The Court, where the nine Gems scintillated like the stars of the firmament, were amazed at the crudeness of the poet; and had no difficulty in awarding the prize to Kalidasa, who on this occasion used all his genius to offer a piece worthy of the occasion. Magha was no less amazed now than the court. But when the trial was over, and the prize won, Kalidas ran in open court to his rival, fell at his feet, and offered him the laureate's crown, saying: "Oh, Master, Thou alone art worthy of this prize, and I have won it by an unworthy trick. Forgive me." But Magha raised him with a smile, returned the prize, and said "No, indeed ! none but thou art the True Poet, since thou knowest thy audience, and I did not. Keep this mark of a King's appreciation, and a brother poet's confirmation".

the artists in every art gave forth of their best. Drama, poetry, painting, carving—not to mention more mundane Arts,—were all similarly encouraged, and formed the frequent amusement of India's cultured aristocracy.

The remaining two *Ashramas*, that of the Forest-dweller and of the *Sannyasi*, did not lend much aid to the growth and encouragement of Art directly. Men entered these, when the bonds of flesh had ceased to hold them to the pleasures of earth. They devoted their energies to faith, meditation, and yoga. They were thus themselves out of the pale of daily life; but perhaps their Yoga and meditation, and often their direct teaching to the young aspirants whose ideals and outlook on life they cultivated, helped the progress of Art considerably. Even a Sannyasi could promote Art in this manner, without injury to his faith, or stain on his cloth. Certainly the Buddhist recluses—Bhikshūs—were foremost in thus developing the Art of their times, as Ajanta testifies and as *Malvika-Agnimitra* clearly proves.

Dress and Ornamentation. The dress and ornaments of the people of Ancient India afforded another important medium through which the love of beauty was translated in their daily life.

Dress is a most eminent form of individual, as well as of racial, self-expression. It is at the same time an excellent embodiment of their sense of beauty. An artistic age generally produces an artistic dress, and artistic people clothe themselves accordingly. For individual self-expression, no human activity affords so much scope to the average man or woman as does dress or personal adornment. The various costumes of India have always struck every visitor as very artistic, right from the days of Alexander the Great to the present times. Megasthenes' is the earliest testimony we have; and it is elaborated and supported by contemporary sculptures and painting in all the centuries of Ancient India, especially the reliefs at Sanchi or the frescoes at Ajanta, which flash the past in vivid colours before our eyes.

A general idea, gathered from a survey of these pictures, is, that the purpose of dress in those days was to set out the natural grace and rhythm of the line and curves of the human form. We see no attempts at distortion of these lines, either by very artificially narrow waist lines, false appearance of height by high-heeled shoes, or forced smallness of feet. The natural form in the fullness of its development was rejoiced in, and portrayed. Owing to the general warmth of the climate, very scanty and fine clothing material was

used, very often in the nature of wraps, and not tailor-made clothes. The tailor had scarcely room in a society where dress consisted more of draping than of stitching together of materials. This does not mean that the Art was unknown, for there are at Ajanta examples of fine tailored bodices worn by women, as well as costumes by men, bringing out every natural curve of the form, so as to make us think they were glued on the person.[1] But there are some writers who assert that the men and women clothed thus are meant to be foreigners, and hence their distinguishing dress. If so, perhaps the Art was unknown.

Materials. The materials in use, cotton and silk, appear to be generally of a soft and transparent texture. They fall in with the curves of the body, and their transparency is very well brought out both in sculpture and painting. Silk and cotton cloth were both made in India ; but cotton was the real indigenous industry, and every home had its own weaving and spinning.

> "Its marvellously woven tissues and sumptuously inwrought apparel have been the immemorial glories of India. India was probably the first of all countries that perfected weaving, and the art of its gold brocade and flimsy muslins, comely as the curtains of Solomon, is even older than the code of Manu. Weaving is alluded to as early as the Vedas."[2]

Megasthenes thought similarly when he wrote :

> "their robes are worked in gold, and ornamented with various stones, and they wear also flowered garments of the finest muslin."[3]

So famed was India for its stuffs, that everywhere, almost in all ancient civilisations, we have them mentioned. The muslins similar to those of Dacca of later times and the brocades of Benares are referred to even in the *Bible*, and also in other books,[4] as Mr. Birdwood points out on pages 235 to 241 and onwards in his work on the *Industrial Arts of India*. "Fine Weaving" he says, "probably passed on from India to Assyria, Egypt, and through the Phoenicians into Southern Europe."[5]

At Ajanta striped materials,—at times solely cotton, at times gold and tinselled stripes intervening,—can be detected. Bordered materials are also observed. The scarf like apparels

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[1] See Illustration opp.
[2] Birdwood: *The Industrial Arts of India*, p. 235.
[3] Strabo—XV, 1, 35-56 from *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 262-272.
[5] Birdwood: *The Industrial Arts of India*, p. 236.

PLATE LIX.

STYLE OF DRESS AT AJANTA

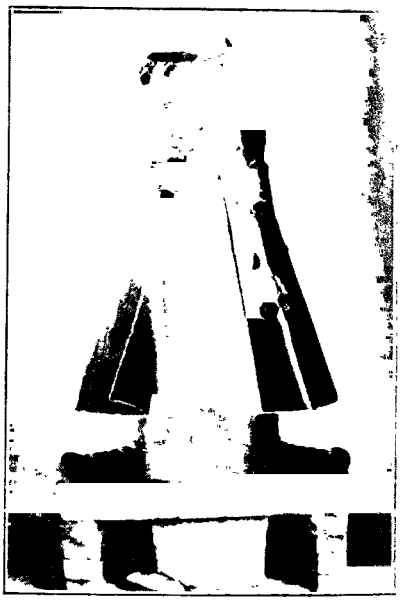


THE QUEEN'S TOILET

(By Courtesy Archaeological Department of Hyderabad.)

PLATE LX.

STYLE OF DRESS IN ARYAVARTA



KANISHKA MATHURA



BHARHUT



BHARHUT



BHARHUT

Compare plates 59 and 60 in order to observe the difference in dress. A head covering is present at Bharhut, absent at Ajanta, where the hair is adorned with jewels or flowers. Man's dress, especially the head-gear is different. Ornaments differ too. Notice the rings on the arms and legs. They suggest a kinship with the dancer at Mohenjodaro, but we do not see them at Ajanta except in one or two places.

Kanishka's dress is very different to anything seen elsewhere But then he was a Kushan emperor.

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India*)

of the women with embroidered borders remind one of the modern georgette with Benares borders. Indeed, a sari form of draping of plain material edges with a border, flowing over the left shoulder, is twice represented in the frescoes reproduced by Mr. Griffiths in his work. Flowered material covered all over, or edged, is likewise seen in these frescoes. Whether it was woven or printed we do not know, but may have been of both styles as both Arts were known in India.[1]

Brilliant and vivid colouring is another attribute always attached to Indian dress. Megasthenes talks of men as generally dressed in white, but the frescoes declare the contrary. In them various colours and shades are visible, which would have been hardly the case if white was universally worn. Birdwood, quoting from *Arian*,[2] talks of muslins, and cotton sashes striped and of different colours, purple cloth ; muslins, of the colour of mellow being exported from India to all the ports of the Arabian and East African Coasts :

> "Indeed the cotton tissues and stuffs of India have always been even more sought after, for the beauty and brilliance of their natural dyes, than for the fitness and softness with which they are woven."

But to the Indians themselves the texture must have been of immense importance. For who, having spent several summers in India, does not know the boon of having soft and flimsy materials to wear. The Dacca muslins of later days and their more ancient prototypes seem to have satisfied the most fastidious tastes in that respect. Because of their intense fineness of texture, they are spoken of in poetic language of the late Moghul Courts as *ab-rawan*, or (running water) *baft-howa* (woven air), *subhanam* (evening dew)—

> "All plain white webs, the poetic names of which convey to the reader a truer idea of their exquisite fineness and delicacy, and of the estimation in which they are held, than whole pages of literal description."[3]

At times some of these muslins were printed, as shown at Ajanta. The designs were printed by hand from wood blocks. Favourite motifs are the cone or shawl pattern, widespread from North to South ; flower sprays (butis) of every sort arrayed over the ground

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[1] Coomaraswamy : *Arts and Crafts*, p. 193.
Birdwood : *The Industrial Arts of India*, pp. 236-240.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 243.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

diagonally dispersed, birds (especially peacocks), and continuous floral border patterns.

Men's Dress. (a) *Style of laymen.* Men generally wore *dhotis*, similar to those we see to-day, except that they were of a thinner material, and worn to fit the form exactly. Colours and styles were used, or plain and bordered materials also. On the upper parts of their body, men, according to the frescoes at Ajanta, did not wear anything; but from certain sculptures as well as from Megasthenes, we find some of them wearing a light tunic which is evidently of transparent material, e.g. statue of Buddha, and Kanishka.[1] This may suggest that there were different styles in dress So there were. In Ajanta alone we see so many different styles, and perhaps there were distinguishing marks of each kingdom. Or perhaps there was a northern style and southern, for there are distinct differences, especially in the head-gears and ornamentation, of the people at Sanchi, Madura and those at Ajanta [2] Yet the basis seems the same. There was the *dhoti* and the various styles of draping it. Some used waist bands, some did not. Head-gears were favoured in some kingdoms in the style of our *dupata*; while others preferred the crowning tiara; while some the convenience of the bare head.

(b) *Style of Bhikshus.* The Buddhist *Bhikshus* wore a particularly long *dhoti* cloth, which stretched almost down to their ankles, and was passed round their body and over the left shoulder, so as to make them appear completely clothed in one piece, except for a small portion of the right shoulder. This particular drapery looks extremely artistic in the paintings, and must have required more skill than the close fitting type of the laymen.

(c) *Men's hair and head-gears.* The hair generally is left bare, or covered with head-gear of various types resembling tiaras. The head-gears of foreigners differ from those of the natives, as shown in the frescoes. They were of various styles and quality, and perhaps the richest is that worn by the nobility. The servants are seen usually bare-headed.

Jewels were an integral part of the dress of both the women and men; but we shall discuss this while describing women's clothes.

Women's Dress. Remarks made on the various styles of men's dress apply also to the attire of the fairer half. While describing the dress

[1] Look opp. pages.

[2] Observe the difference pointed out on the illustration, opp. page.

PLATE LXI.

VARIOUS COIFFURES AT AJANTA



PLATE LXII.

VARIOUS COIFFURES AT AJANTA



of women, we must repeat what has already been stated before, that for this topic the main basis is the frescoes at Ajanta and Bagh, which, being works of contemporary artists, very probably represent the prevailing modes and styles, just as each fold should fall, or each streamlet should hang—a thing not at all common in life, or everyday dress.

Women are seen wearing various styles and modes at Ajanta. There are some dressed in what we should now call costumes and blouses, others in jackets. Some wear a one-piece garment, extending from below the shoulders to the knees. Others a style similar to our modern 'Deccani sari'. But, what appears the oftenest, and hence must have been the typical dress of the times, was a dhoti type of lower garment of transparent material, especially where high caste ladies are represented,[1] fastened on with an elaborate hip girdle. The upper portion of the body was mostly bare except for a bust-band, or an Indian *choli* without back and shoulders. Sometimes, in addition to these, there appears a loose hanging cloak-like garment,[2] transparent in effect, and visible by means of streamers attached, flowing from the shoulder to the knees, or even further down. Thus, the dress seems to be about the simplest imaginable, yet graceful and very becoming

What must have required the greatest amount of time and labour in a woman's toilette equipment was the hair. It was truly regarded as woman's glory, and the utmost use was made of it. Every imaginable type of coiffure that one can think of is there at Ajanta, if only one has the patience to search among the bewildering variety of the most fascinating style of hair-dressing ever beheld by the eyes of mankind. Even the modern bobbed hair is not absent. Curls, ringlets, waves, long bobs, fringes, coils, rolls, and chignon of various types, adorned with flowers and jewels, charm the eye. If women in Ancient India really dressed their hair in those modes, each head must have been a study in artistry How much must it have offered as food to the wearer, as well to the beholder's aesthetic sense! To attempt to describe the various modes apparent even in the paintings and sculpture would take up too much room, and the effect would never be as satisfying as a single glance at the page opposite, as well as the various illustrations given from the Ajanta frescoes.

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[1] *Queen's Toilet.*
[2] *Ibid.*—Griffiths *Queen's Toilet* description of plate.

Perhaps, at this stage, it would not be out of place to add a word or two regarding the personal decoration by the women of Ancient India. Of their love of flowers, I have already spoken ; and shall speak again in the next section. The flowers supplied the ancient Indian lady with natural fragrance serving as scent. *Tambula* gave her lips the vivid redness desired from time immemorial, while the henna dye—*mendi*—helped to tint her toes and fingers, palms and soles, with a lovely, lasting scarlet hue, that has ever been popular with Indian women of all classes.[1] They rubbed collyrium in their eyes, lending them a depth and mystery which their natural darkness only served to heighten. The red-mark in the centre of the forehead was like a flaming torch, the mark of a happily married woman, whom none may gaze at except to reverence.[2]

The *Bhikshunis*, or the Buddhist nuns, dressed differently, even as the *Bhikshus*. Loose tunics covered their whole body. At first thin material was used. But, as Griffiths tells us, this custom was much abused by the Buddhist nuns, who used it especially to set off the charms of their body. This angered the Buddha, who passed an order that no Bhikshuni should henceforth wear garments of thin material.

Ornamentation and Jewellery.

The Indians evidently were no believers in the old adage : that 'beauty needs no foreign aid of ornaments'. They used ornaments to set off every part of their figure. The neck, the hands, the arms, the fingers, the hips, the ankles, the toes, the hair and the ears—were all given their due share of ornaments. Those who could not afford precious stones used flowers, as Sita in her forest retreat. But, as a people, the ancients seem to have loved jewels for their own sake, and used them profusely, at times even to an exaggerated extent, one may think.

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[1] Cp. with description of Yaksha's wife in *Mega-Duta*, pp. 94-98. Tr. Wilson.

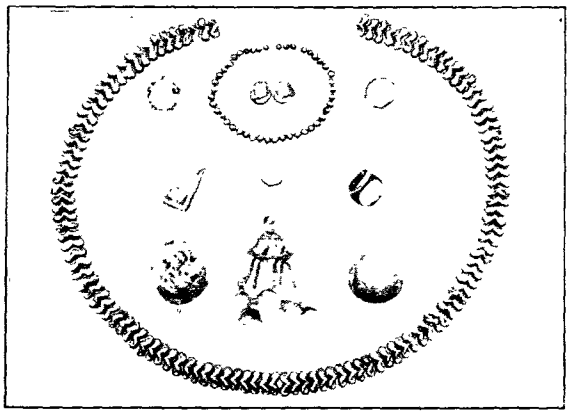
[2] The description of spring in *Malvika-Agnimitra*, comparing it to a dainty dame duly adorned, is too precious to be omitted. It shows the extent to which make-up to use Modern Phraseology was used.

Translation:

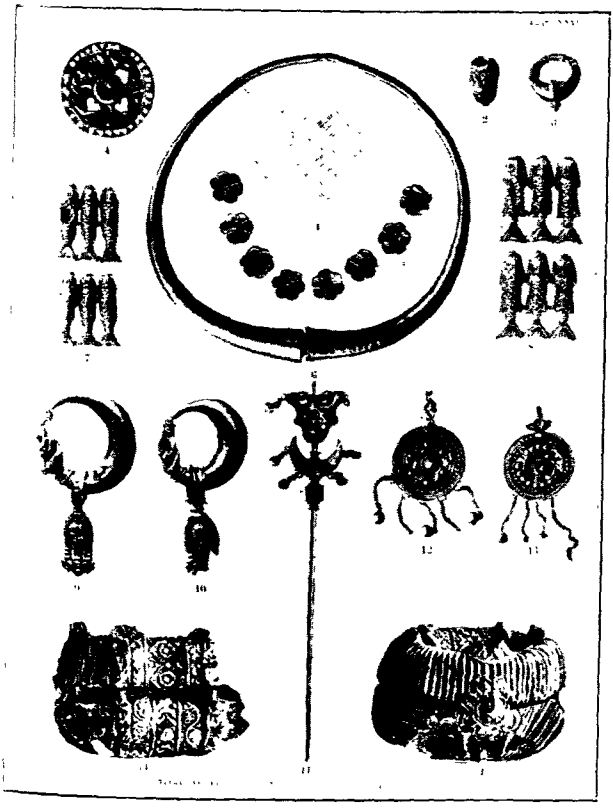
The Beauty of Spring verily seems to treat with contempt the way in which women decorate their faces; for the splendour of the scarlet Asoka tree surpasses the bimb-like redness of women's lips; the dark red-white Kurbaka flower eclipses the powdered-face, while the Tilaka flower, dotted with dark bees puts into shade the red-mark on the women's forehead, and their eyes darkened by collyrium.

PLATE LXIII.

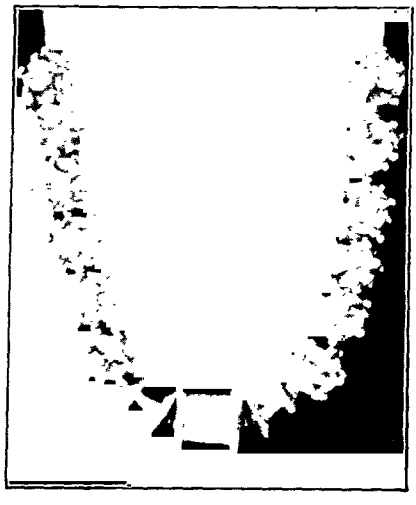
JEWELS AND ORNAMENTS



JEWELLERY FROM SIRKAP

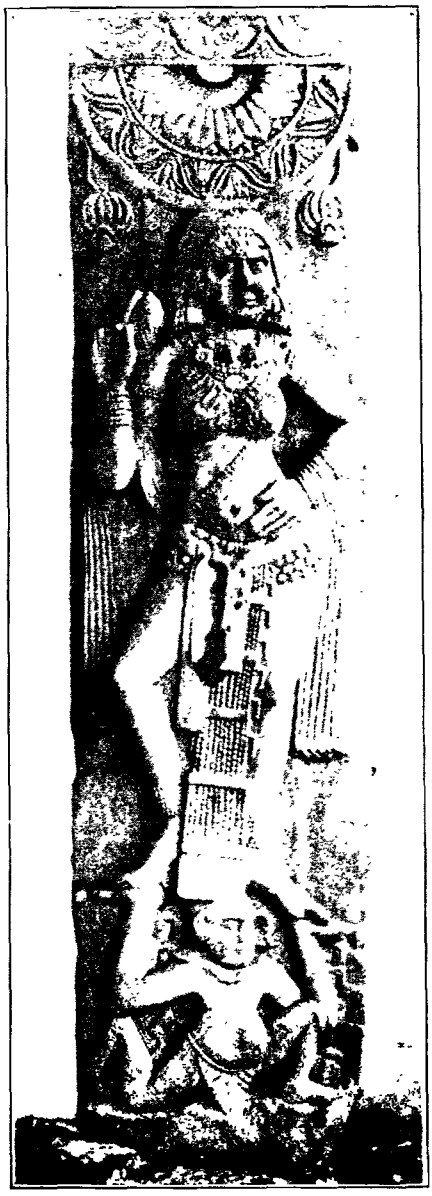


ORNAMENTS FROM TAXILA



(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.*)

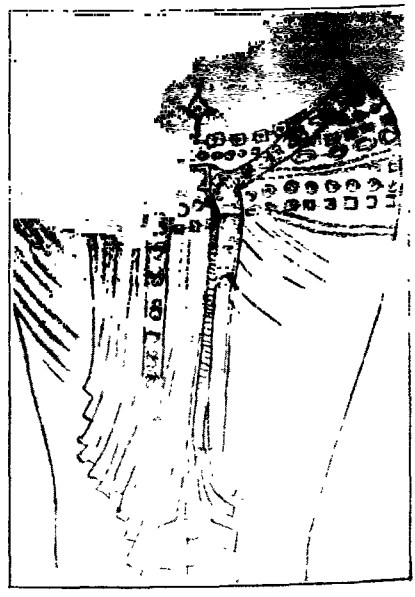
PLATE LXIV.



(a)

(a) Various kinds of ornaments, and the manner in which they were worn, is illustrated in this sculpture.

(b) An elaborate waist-band which was a very popular yet necessary ornament in the older days.



(b)

(*Cp. Buddhist India, R. Davis.*)

And what a perfect piece of handicraft each ornament was! Both the wearer as well as the designer seemed to have revelled in the intricacies of the lines and forms. Both men and women used ornaments.

> "The jeweller's and goldsmith's art in India is indeed of the highest antiquity; and the forms of Indian jewellery, as well as of gold, and silver plate, and the chasing and embossment decorating them, have come down in an unbroken tradition from the Ramayana and Mahabharata."[1]

The ornaments were, originally, worn as a protection against evil spirits or unlucky planets.[2] Later, as man's love for the beautiful increased, decoration was added to these charms, and so we have the beginning of the Art of jewellery. In India Coomaraswamy says—

> "The work descends in an unbroken line from the primitive and still surviving use of garlands of fresh flowers, and of seeds."[3]

Indeed, most of the names surviving do seem to come from flowers. Ear-rings are called Karanaphul; then there are chumpa bud necklaces, or the garlands of enchantment, etc. It was, and still is, the ordained duty of every husband to provide his wife with jewels and clothes. She should never appear before her husband without them, and after his death discard them for ever.

From the paintings at Ajanta, we see this love of ornaments in 'life', so to say. Men wore necklaces, tiaras, bracelets, armlets. The male menials, it appears from the frescoes, did not wear jewels, and the Brahmins[4] i.e. the tutors of Prince Siddhartha, wear only seed necklaces round their necks. But we cannot from this one representation say that the Brahmins as a class did not wear jewels.

Women of all grades wore jewels, whether princesses, ladies, maids, or dancing girls. The latter at times were completely nude, except for these ornaments as the frescoes bear witness

Paes gives a description of the maids of honour at Vijayanagar (16th Century). We reproduce it here, to show how little the ornamentation had changed, if at all, in 500 years.

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[1] Griffiths: *Indian Arts*, p. 186.
Coomaraswamy: *Arts and Crafts*, p. 149.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 154.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 149.
[4] Griffith's *Ajanta*, plate 45.

> "And on these caps they wear flowers made of large pearls, collars on the neck with jewels of gold, very richly set with many emeralds and diamonds and rubies and pearls; and besides this many strings of pearls, and others for shoulder-belts; on the lower part of the arm many bracelets, with half of the upper arm all bare, having armlets in the same way, all of precious stones, on the waist many girdles of gold and of precious stones, which girdles hang in order, one below the other almost as far down as half the thigh, besides these belts they have other jewels, for they wear very rich anklets even of greater value than the rest."[1]

In the pictures opposite, as well as in some of the sculpture from Bharhut and Sanchi, we see jewels worn in equal profusion. Of the remains of these, we have only a few recorded ancient specimens. But the various patterns and designs now in use, we are told, have come down to us in an unbroken line from ancient times. From the tracings reproduced we can admire for ourselves the delicacy and intricacy of the work, perfect execution and the variety of designs.

The women it appears attached to their jewels, especially necklaces and bracelets, little silk and tissue streamlets, which give a very pretty fluttering effect in the frescoes.

Not only were men and women adorned with ornaments; but horses, elephants, bullocks,—all had their trappings of equal splendour and variety. These we need hardly describe, for they exist in as great a vogue to this day, not only in the native States of India, but all the pomp and ceremony and the paraphernalia attached to the ancient Courts are imitated in British India to-day

Palaces and cities were jewelled too.[2] Architectural columns were hung with festoons of pearls, beads;[3] and carriages[4] were also decorated with jewels as Ajanta bears witness. The *Toy Cart* speaks of golden stairways inlaid with all sorts of gems

"Crystal windows from which are hanging strings of pearls" and "arches set with sapphires look as though they were the homes of the rainbow". A *shastra* on ship-building mentions the garlands of pearls, and gold hung from the carved prows.

Megha-Duta also speaks of such jewelled decorations in the Yaksha's home. But these may be considered only flights of fancy, perhaps unparalleled in life. In Vijayanagar, however, Abdul Razzak described the Royal Audience Hall in the XV Century A.

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[1] *Arts and Crafts*, p. 151.
[2] *Arts and Crafts*, p 152.—Griffith's *Ajanta*, pls. 5, 6, 7.
[3] Griffith's, Cave 17.
[4] *Arts and Crafts*, p. 153.

D., as having walls and ceiling plated with solid gold of the thickness of a sword blade ; while the Imperial Audience Halls of the Great Mughals were known to historians to be studded in walls and columns with precious stones of every hue. They remained a living monument of the splendour as well as artistry of Indian daily life for over a hundred years, till the rapacity of Nadir Shah (1746), the vandalism of the Abdali (1761), the Jats and the Marathas (1765-1805), the ravages of the Sikhs, and the loot by the British (1857), removed the last remnants of a departed wealth and vanished glory.

From this account of the popularity of jewels in India, one can well imagine what an important part in their artistic life the jewels must have played. Those who still wear jewels and delight in them know how much of native genius has to be exerted before one orders an ornament. The first desire is that it should be unique ; and so one generally chooses, or even makes, a pattern which is rare Its design, lightness, or heaviness are adjusted to suit the figure. If colours have to be used, the stones have to be carefully matched and built into the cameos. Can we for one moment believe that people who loved ornaments, as the ancient Indians did, and made them a means of self-expression, could have done one whit less?

They must have created and suggested patterns to vie with each other in magnificence or ornaments, even as still happens, and will go on happening so long as women are, and ornaments exist. But the main difference was that jewels were a necessary part of the existence of both men and women, and not merely adornments as they are now. Rich and poor all alike delighted in them and could afford to get them. At present, very probably both delight in them, but only the rich can afford to get them ; hence the poor have to starve their urge for expression of beauty through this medium, which was once so cherished and popular.

The jewellers were themselves very often artists. They never merely copied designs from books, but carried on traditional ones, making changes just where they thought proper, taking into account the requirements of the wearer, or created new ones. There were no machines ; and hence no stereotyped designs that hardly require a stroke from the hand of a skilled craftsman were turned out. Instead, rich households had their own jewellers, as at Vasantasena's abode in the *Toy Cart*.[1] They were employed for life and worked for the family ; made wares to appeal to the cultivated

[1] Ryder's translation, p. 70.

taste of their cultured patrons ; spending their genius in creating and making new designs and patterns, wherewith to charm the wearer, and dazzle the world yet give their innate capacities full play. Where the jewellers were not kept in the household, they had to come to the house and work under the supervision of the client so that both could guide where necessary, and the result was satisfactory to all.

These, then, are the various modes and ways in which Art entered the daily life of Ancient India, and helped to make it refined and beautiful.

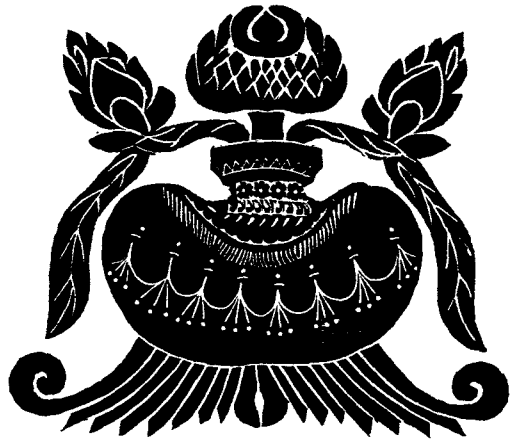
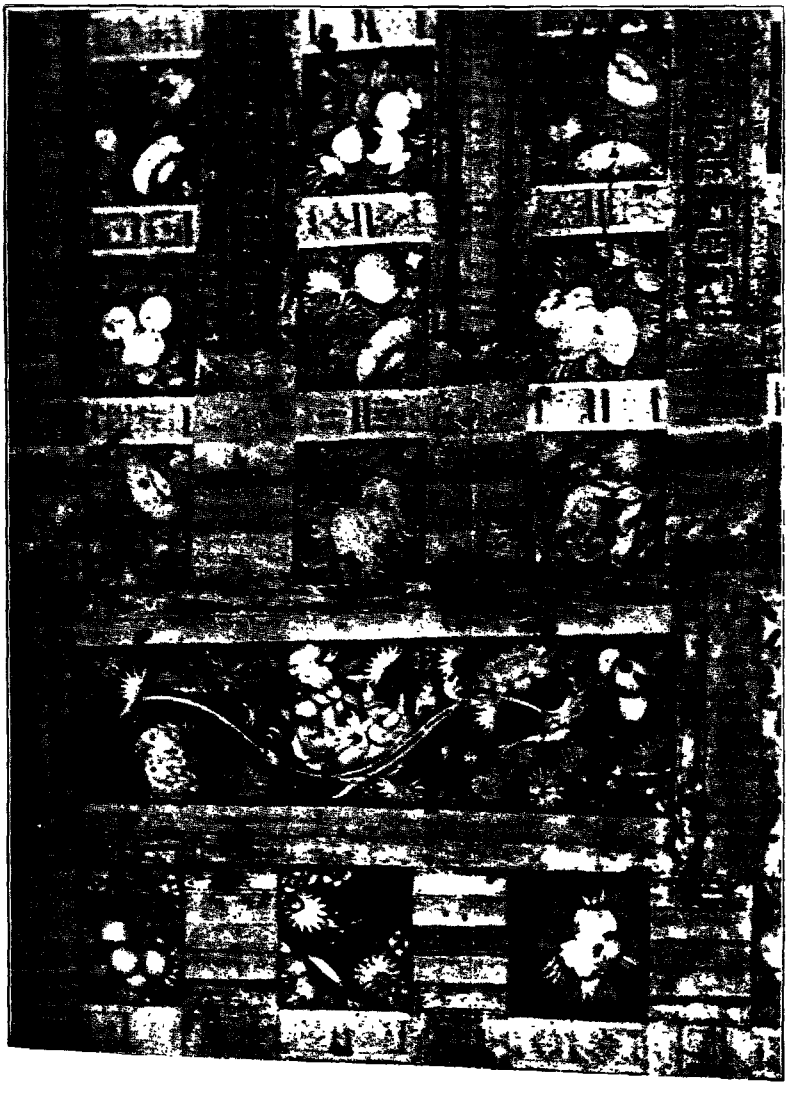


PLATE LXV.



FLORAL PANEL FROM AJANTA

(*Copyright Archaeological Survey of India.*)



CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

Conclusion. The foregoing chapters have attempted to review the nature and ideals of Art in Ancient India, the institutions which aided and moulded it, and the place it actually occupied in the daily life of the people under whom it flourished. The conclusions reached are scattered in the several chapters, which may now be summarised and collected here.

Part I. Chapter I. Starting with an appreciation of the place of Art in civilised life generally, we realised that Art is a necessary adjunct of civilisation, a medium of a whole people's self-expression, wherever the people and the civilisations concerned had an individuality of their own, e.g. in Ancient Egypt, China, Assyria, Persia, or Greece. Upon this followed an attempt to define Art, and determine its denotation and connotation. Art we understand to be self-expression,—whether by an individual, a people, or an epoch—which embodies the individual's emotional experience roused by the perception of the Beautiful. This definition refers more particularly to what are usually called the Fine Arts, distinguishing them, on the one hand, from all other activities loosely called Arts, simply because they involve a certain degree of personal skill ; and, on the other hand, from those other activities or creations which are called crafts, in which the commercial motive is predominantly inspiring the craftsman, as contradistinguished from the creative impulse inspiring a true artist in his search for self-expression.

On this basis, the Fine Arts are limited to Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music, Dancing, and the Literary Arts. The essen-

tial relation between Art and Society, as an important factor in the origin and development of Art, is next reviewed. Social ideals and institutions influence Art, through the person of the artist, his heritage, environment, education, his appreciation by his fellows, and the economic value placed upon his work. The social position accorded to the artist is also a factor influencing his Art. Conversely, Art's influence on society, and social ideals and institutions, as an unconscious critic and inspirer of the love of freedom and of beauty, making daily life richer and pleasanter, must also not be underestimated This laid the foundation, and on it was commenced the main structure.

Part II. Chapter III

In part II, the significance of our racial heritage was examined, in order to consider the basic elements and peculiarities of Indian culture and Art. The Aryans and the Dravidians, who form the main bulk of the Indian population, were both fairly advanced at the very threshold of our period, and yet so thoroughly commingled in the ultimate fusion of the races, that we found it very difficult to assess separately the particular contribution of either race to the evolution of Indian culture and Art. That each had a high degree of culture of its own, peculiar to itself, is indisputable. Not merely were they both materially advanced, but they happened to possess such supplementary and complimentary qualities, that, in spite of the advanced development of each race, there was no cultural clash, but rather a complete assimilation. The result of this process of amalgamation, the Indian Culture namely, had about its outward form an Aryan impress, because of one important Aryan contribution, the language which wielded the whole culture into one. But in essence, this whole was certainly a combination of two distinct cultures, some special features of each of which may, with some care, be even now discernible. This amalgam later on comes to be known as Hindu Culture in contradistinction to Mohammedan culture. Buddhism gave the finishing touch, or perhaps was the last factor, in this long drawn out process of assimilation of the two races and cultures. One race was virile, hardy and assertive ; the other was perhaps refined, humanised, peace-loving. One completely glorified personal strength, physical beauty, and exalted manhood. The other paid homage to the gentler role and softer graces as typified by woman. This was probably because the Dravidians worshipped the "Mother Goddess" ; hence these traits typical of their civilisation. Perhaps the later Hindu cult of Kali or Shakti is an outcome of the amalgam between the more brutal

Aryan and the more human Dravidian. In a more social, more amiable light, the same peculiarity is noticeable in the social ideal of the later day Hindu law-givers, who adore the mother, and guard and reverence womanhood. The race, says the *Gita*, will perish whose womankind becomes tainted. One searches in vain for an echo of such a sentiment in the most ancient of the Aryan *Rig-Veda*. On the other hand, the principle of descent and heritage through the father, the knitting of the family round the male stock, the firmness strength and solidity of the entire social fabric, the assignment of the more active and assertive role to the male, are all marks of the Hindu social system and culture, which no doubt spring from the Aryan source.

This mutual action and recreation may have, for ought we know, taken long to show itself. But in the historic Hindu society and culture, the results are manifested in a variety of forms, through the channels of the people's religion, philosophy, science, Art ; reaching their climax in the Golden Age of the illustrious Gupta Dynasty.

We were, however, not concerned with the whole of this culture. Confining ourselves only to Art, it was endeavoured to show that Art took root as early as the *Vedas* with the Aryans, and with the Dravidians even earlier. Scholars—Fergusson, Coomaraswamy, S. Iyengar—look upon the Dravidian as a very artistic race Perhaps the whole Art of the Dance, as performed by the Prince of Dancers and the God of Dance, Nataraja, was a Dravid contribution. The Nagas, Yakshas, and Dryads, that enrich the Hindu mythology, and embellish the Art forms, are also traceable to Dravid origins. But, above all, the whole idea of figured representation, was also theirs, as the Aryans were during the Rig-Vedic age nature-worshippers, who condemned idol-worship as a desecration. But this attempt at distinguishing the Aryan and Dravidian features was really futile, because the material was insufficient.

Chapter IV. In any case, we dealt thenceforward with the amalgam. The growth of this composite civilisation was aided chiefly by the evolution of a common religious sentiment, and the formation of a common social system. The driving power or the motive forces were supplied by the concrete creeds founded on this. Vedic Brahmanism at first, Buddhism and Jainism later, and the revivalist Hinduism of a still later age, included Art in their fold, and gave it its ideals and supplied its inspiration. With the growing importance of these religions, artistic expression became more varied, more refined, more symbolical. At the same time, in actual

life, it assumed a more integral and assured position. It was formally admitted into life as one of the four aims of existence. But Religion was not slow to discover the value of Art as means of propaganda. To learn through Art was the simplest method thinkable, and most effective, because the appeal was to the intuition. The aim of all Indian religion and philosophy seems to have been to establish an identity with 'Reality', or the true essence behind the illusion of matter. Art adopted this as its mission as well; and to its success the whole of the remains of Art of Ancient India testifies. Through these artistic creations, the Indian artist made it possible for others less gifted, to realise and participate in this his experience of this Cause of all cosmic energy. Born itself of social ideals and forces, Art thus gives society a new impetus to express, fulfil, and realise itself.

Through the society, the individual was also benefitted by Art in his daily life; for it brought piety a sense of the fitness of things, and therefore of justice, and spirituality of outlook, into the hearth and family.

The aim of all Indian Religion, Philosophy and Art being the same, all social and economic institutions were fashioned to realise and facilitate it. Once devised, such fundamental roots did these institutions take, that even the protesting faiths of Jainism and Buddhism could not change the basic structure of the peoples organisation.

Chapter V. The most important of these institutions, the structure known as the *Varna Dharma*, functioning both socially as well as economically, was a great help to the progress of Art. The social side, recognising and sympathising with the purpose of Art, gave the artist a secure status, a recognised vocation, and a fixed value. Hence the progressive deterioration and degradation of Art, inevitable in a wholly commercialised society like ours, was guarded against. Art could and did, therefore, remain at a high level, and the religious ideals, social institutions, and economic conditions all helped to maintain the level reached throughout the period of our study.

Of the other Social Institutions, the King and Court contributed perhaps most, by patronage, by personal influence and participation, to the enrichment of Art, and the cultivation of taste. Had Asoka not set the fashion of building in stone, wooden structures would have continued, and consequently been subject to destruction, —to the lasting poverty of the Art of building in India. Besides this,

the consistent policy of complete religious toleration, maintained by the Indian-empire builders, avoided bigoted hatred and secured almost a miracle as it must seem to modern Indian eyes,—who hardly find it possible to keep the two main religions now in existence away from strife,—of three faiths namely Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism, existing side by side. Asoka's Edicts, carved on rocks and monolithic *lats*, are a standing testimony to this enlightened policy of religious toleration, and freedom of thought and worship ; and that too in a period when religious zeal was at its highest, and the Emperor himself the promoter. The Vaishnava Kings of the Gupta Dynasty were no less broad minded. They endowed the famous University of Nalanda—a Buddhist stronghold—in a manner hardly equalled in human history. Shri Harsha was another such benefactor. Not only the King and Court, but the whole society was so constructed, from the apex to the base, from the Imperial institutions to the village council in the smallest village, that it aided the cultivation and preservation of the Arts.

The village autonomy, by preserving peace and order, in spite of the dynastic changes in the Central Government, secured a steady flow and development of Art within its jurisdiction, and so made Art more a social factor, of everyday importance in the life of the people, than even Imperial might could have accomplished. Not merely promotion, but the preservation and cultivation were very ably carried out by these little autonomous village communities, when the Art of this country was in real danger, by fostering local talent, and native traditions and industries.

The educational organisation and institutions, under the various important religions, were not far behind in training and disciplining the individual mind to the effects of beauty, and perception of the beautiful. The training and disciplining of his senses was a part of the curriculum of the *Brahmacharin*. Appreciation of the refined and the beautiful was inculcated in the hermitages during the student *Ashrama*, amid scenes of sylvan beauty, in the rustic forest atmosphere, green, full of charm and tranquillity, breathing forth the varied perfumes of the ripening spring. Living and moving in harmony with nature in all her varied manifestations, learning to understand the twitter of the birds, the sounds of the animals, the call of the spirit through sympathy and love, the *Brahmacharin* became one with the Infinite, the Universal Soul, and the ultimate Reality, as is so well portrayed in the sylvan retreat in the Shakuntala. When the forest glades yield place to the magnificent arcades, and fairy

like turrets of the majestic halls with their frescoed walls in the Universities of Taxila, Nalanda or Ajanta, the aesthetic perceptions were more refined, and the longing for the beautiful in daily life and surroundings intensified.

Thus the original racial heritage, strengthened by the religions and institutions of Aryavarta, encouraged, developed and preserved the Arts of Ancient India on a very high level, for almost twelve hundred years (2nd Century B.C. to 10th Century A.D.).

Part III. Chapter VI. The main ideals from the faiths and philosophies of Aryavarta inspiring its Art appear to be the search for the Reality behind Illusion, the Spirit behind *Maya*; and, the Essential Unity and Equality of all existence.

How these ideals, generated by the religions and philosophies of the ages, and nurtured by the institutions, developed as racial experiences, and took, through individual minds, forms as Art motifs of the particular periods, as embodied in the *Buddha in Samadhi*, the *Trimurti*, and the *Nataraj*, is next reviewed. These racial expressions, it has been shown, embody in themselves the whole life and Art philosophy of the ages. A brief review of the various classes of Art remains in Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Music and Dancing, and the Literary Arts, also portray concretely how, round these main ideals of the search for Reality and Essential Unity of Life, the whole Indian Art centres.

Chapter VIII. So far, the treatment had been a theoretical, analytical, dissertation. Thereafter follows a description of how Art entered into the everyday life of the people of those days. We have traced this through the forms and ceremonials, rituals and sacrifices, their mode of life, their houses and decoration, furniture, utensils, forms of recreations and amusements. In all these, both by means of textual authorities, and illustrations from sculpture and painting, it was shown that the artistic sense of the people was given the fullest opportunity for cultivation and satisfaction. The popular festivals and dramas, the game-houses and exhibitions of personal skill or strength, of which we have any knowledge, all point in the same direction. Dress was another important outlet for the exercise of innate artistry. Relying chiefly on the frescoes of Ajanta, and Bagh, and supported by the sculptures, we have described and illustrated the dress of the peoples of Ancient India. The material, style, drapery were all chosen and arranged with exquisite grace, heightening by each fold and curve the rhythmic lines of the human form, especially the feminine. The various styles and mode of hair

dressing and ornamentation, was yet another avenue, by which taste and refinement were brought into everyday existence. The various styles and materials for the embellishment of the lips, eyes, and forehead, the dyeing of the hands and feet, the care of the nails, all exhibit a wonderful taste, sound knowledge of form and the effect of artistic ornamentation, betraying an intense love for the beautiful. We may, therefore, agree with Coomaraswamy and say that—

> "Art was an integral quality inherent in all activities, entertained by all in their daily environment, and produced by all in proportion to their capacity."

If Art entered so deeply into life in all its aspects, did it in any way make its influence felt on the general character of the people? One would be led to expect that, if Art and Culture permeated deep into the daily life, the cultural level of the Ancient Indian would be high comparatively. Let us see if that was so.

The direct influence of Art on the life of a Nation is evidenced by the character of its people, their love of beauty, the amount of natural refinement about them, the cultural level of their lives, and the code of morality recognised in their everyday existence. These naturally arise, as a result of the high ideals of life, inculcated into the mass of the people through their religion and education. Art, we have seen, is no mean instrument for such inculcation. Religion and education in Aryavarta were overlapping factors, and religion as well as education employed Art as one of the main instruments of their own propaganda, the cultivation of the mind, and the development of faith.

Art was very successful in this purpose, as evidenced by the general level of culture spread in the masses. This, of course, does not apply to modern conditions ; for, almost a thousand years of foreign domination, and about half that of semi-starvation,—culturally as well as physically,—leave no scope for a people to allow the better side of their nature to come uppermost. Greed and meanness inevitably develop in a people subdued, pauperised and stagnating. Honour becomes an exile, morality becomes forced, ignorance breeds intolerance, prejudice creates superstition ; and all these combined produce diffidence and barrenness in the fields of thought and science, art and culture. Bentham once said that successful falsehood is the best defence of a slave, and hence also of a people dominated by another. China once had a reputation for scrupulous honesty. In fact that virtue had become proverbial as regards her.

Yet one finds it is hardly so in our times, very probably, because of foreign domination and exploitation by the Western nations, and Japan. Similarly has India's racial genius deteriorated. But what was the picture before the decline set in?

Havel gives us a good idea of this, while weighing the educative purpose in Indian Art:

> "Hindu art was successful in its educative purpose, may be inferred from the fact known to all, who have intimate acquaintance with Indian life, that the Indian peasantry, though illiterate in the Western sense, are among the most cultured of their class anywhere in the world."[1]

To support this conclusion he quotes a statement from Dr. Lefroy, a gentleman who has had much to do with, and had spent many years in intimate contact with, the farmers of India. This bears testimony also—

> "to the extraordinary aptitude with which even the poorest and wholly illiterate Hindu peasant would engage in the discussion of, or speculation on, the deepest philosophical and ethical questions."
>
> "This is so," Havel concludes, "just because art has penetrated so deeply into the national life of India."[2]

As to the type of manhood developed under this atmosphere, Hiuen Tsang will be our guide. He says of the Indians—

> "when they have finished their education, and have attained thirty years of age, then their character is formed, and their knowledge ripe. These are men far seen in antique lore, and fond of requirements of learning, are content in seclusion, leading lives of continence, though they are not moved by honour or reproach, their fame is widespread. Though their family be in affluent circumstances, such men make up their minds to be like vagrants, and get their food by begging as they go about. With them there is honour in knowing the truth, and there is no disgrace in being destitute. The rulers treat them with ceremony, but cannot make them come to court.[3] Forgetting fatigue, they expatiate in the arts and sciences, seeking for wisdom while relying on perfect virtue."

It is not every age, and it is not every nation, that can boast of such types of men as are here described by Hiuen Tsang.

But this is merely a comment on a particular highly evolved type. We need something that relates to the average individual in Ancient India. Some of the earliest travellers as well as the Chinese pilgrims supply us information on this also.

Strabo, for example, says of the Indians of his days—

> "They are so honest, as neither to require lock to their doors, nor writings to bind their agreement."

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[1] Havel: *Ideals of Indian Art.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[3] Das: *Educational System of the Ancient Hindus.*

Arrian adds—

"No Indian was ever known to tell an untruth."[1]

And Megasthenes concludes—

"truth and virtue, they hold alike in esteem."[2]

Hiuen Tsang, a few centuries later, gives us a similar verdict—

"The Kshatriyas and Brahmans are clean handed and unostentatious, pure and simple in life and very frugal. They are pure of themselves and not from compulsion. With respect to the ordinary people, although they are naturally light minded, yet they are without craft, and, in administering justice, they are considerate. They are not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct, and are faithful to their oaths and promises. In their rules of government, there is a remarkable rectitude, whilst in their behaviour there is much gentleness and sweetness."[3]

This opinion, with the supporting evidence of the former, bespeaks a truly refined people, whose refinement shows through their personal character, as well as their institutions and surroundings. Of course, one may say these accounts and opinions may be exaggerations ; and perhaps they are so to some extent Yet, we may hold with Max Muller that—

"there must be some ground for this, for it is not a remark, that is frequently made by travellers in foreign countries, even in our times that their inhabitants speak the truth. Read the accounts of English travellers in France, and you will find very little said about French honesty and veracity, while the French accounts of England are seldom without a fling at 'perfide albion.' "[4]

If we are, therefore, to believe such testimonies of contemporary writers and travellers, quoted above, we may, with Havel, assert, that Indian Art was very successful in its mission, namely to educate and enlighten the minds of the people, ultimately giving them a sound cultural basis on which to develop further. It is this embedded culture, that gave the people this high reputation for the persuit of only the good, the true, and the beautiful ; for goodness, truth and beauty are but different names of the same thing.

Ancient Indian Art, these writers assert, is the highest kind of Art ;[5] and its service the highest such an Art can render to a people.

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[1] McCrindle: *India*, p. 92.

[2] Das: *Educational System of Ancient Hindus*, p. 449.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 449.

[4] Max Muller: *India, what it can teach us*, p. 27.

[5] Dr. Cousins divides Art into those of four degrees.—He puts the Arts with the power of revealing the Essence of things as the highest type, the exertions of man has reached. The Ancient Indian Art he says is that type. cp. *Rupam*, January 1921. *The four degrees of Art*, p. 10.

For an Art to be able to do this service, it must necessarily be a truly national Art, embodying the experience of the race ; for, then only can the artists scatter as from an unextinguished hearth, their thoughts among mankind—and be understood. This, according to Mr. Parry, is Art's highest sphere, in which it can render the most valuable service. For, by or through this national service—

> "The cultivation of a whole people is affected; and whether observed or unobserved by themselves, their intent and persuits, their labour and their creations are supplied and enlightened by it." [1]

This is exactly what Art has done for the Indians, and which the foregoing chapters have tried to point out and illustrate. Coomaraswamy, about the best authority we have on Indian Art and its relation to life, agrees with this view. In Ancient India, he says, where no one discussed Art, for there is no Sanskrit equivalent for the modern conception of Art, where none but the philosophers discussed the theory of beauty, and where sculpture and painting were regarded,—not as works of Art, but as means to a definite end,—there Art was an integral quality, inherent in all activities entertained by all in their daily environment, and produced by all in proportion to the vitality (not the kind) of their activity. [2]

We may, therefore, conclude that the Art of Ancient India was of the highest quality, as both its theory and actual specimens show. Like a truly great Art, it rendered the people an unconscious but immense service, the results of which are embodied in the average intellectual development, capacity, and characteristics of the people of Ancient India.

One word more before we conclude. We are to-day very keenly interested in refashioning our national life, and securing for ourselves political and economic independence. We are attempting to keep stride with the pace of modern Civilisation. A worthy and a laudable attempt, so long as we grasp and understand the real meaning of that term civilisation. But, under modern conditions, we are apt to forget it, or misconceive it. If we do so, the result would be tragic. For, have we ever imagined to ourselves an India, politically and economically free, but artistically and culturally dominated by Europe, slave to the ideals of modern commercialisation, dragged at the chariot wheels of the modern machine age? This,

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Mr. Stanley Casson, the author of *XX Century Sculpture*, p. 4 also gives the highest place to the above kind of Art.

[1] Parry: *The Ministry of Fine Arts*, p. 28.

[2] Coomaraswamy: *Introduction to Indian Art*, p. 8.

surely, is not an ideal to be dreamt of, lived for, or to die for. This is, surely, not the India we want to rejuvenate!

The study of the past shows us that India was once a land of culture, refinement and artistry. Anglicised India has no beauty, no romance, and, as far as we can see to-day, she is doing her best to destroy what little of her own individuality still survives, by following hard on the heels of the commercialised West. Where it once loved and sought the hand of the artist in all her environment, in the home, the court, the temple, or the public meeting place, she is now content with the soul-starving products of modern machinery, wasting all her strength and energy in imitating these, instead of reviving, refashioning, life-giving and beauty breeding industries.

Even more painful does this seem, when prophets from the West and East, like Binyon, Flecker, or Okakaru, assert, with a truer insight, that when a new inspiration comes into European Art, it will come again from the East. It will surely not be from the East which is hastening to lose its individuality and its spirituality, and doing its best to merge itself into the material and mechanised part of the European Civilisation.

It is not for a moment implied, that India should not keep pace with the march of Civilisation. She most certainly should. But, she should know what to assimilate from the gifts of the West and what not to, as she did in the ancient days of the Dravids and Aryans, the Greeks and Persians, the Shakas and the Kushans. Here the past can guide us to a great extent, if we will but learn. What we can or may learn from the past is not, as some believe, to reproduce the past in all its details into a different and misfitting environment, or imitate blindly all that our progenitors of a thousand or two thousand years did; but, with the help of the past experience, to know how much to remould and what to revive, and so shape our future under the present influences. For a basis to build on is most essential. If one rejects the past, and will not accept the present, what ground is there on which to lay a foundation?

We have seen how India once loved and glorified Beauty. Wherever we look round us to-day, we find Beauty lost. Why should not each one of us make it our duty or our hobby to bring as much Beauty back into our individual life as possible? Were India to love Beauty as passionately as she once did, she would no longer be in a state of bondage. For, no one would then have the power to enslave and hold her. Art is the nursery for the love of

freedom, and once that is inculcated in our being, no alien force, no mortal machinery, can hold us.

For the regeneration of India, therefore, political and economic freedom alone is not enough. That we must have, no doubt ; but we must also free our souls. And Art alone can do that. A purely material ideal will never give us the courage, the staying power, and force of will we now seem to lack, to build up a great and enduring nation.

> "For that we need ideals and dreams, impossible and visionary, the food of martyrs and artists."[1]

Let us not love Art because it will bring us prosperity.

> "Rather because it is a high function of our being, a door for thoughts to pass from the unseen to the seen, a source of those high dreams, and the ennoblement of that enduring vision that is to be the Indian nation; not less but more strong and more beautiful than ever before, and the gracious giver of beauty to all the nations of the earth."[2]

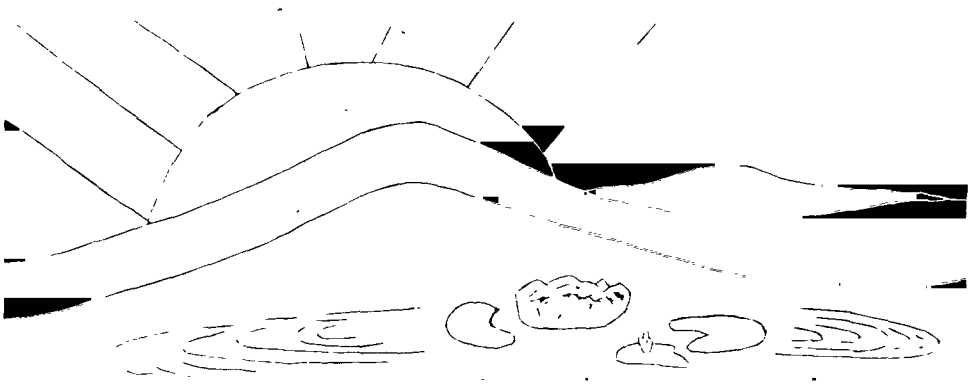
In such a manner India once cultivated Art, and honoured her artists. She was, therefore, for a long while, the home or the breeding ground of Culture, the mother of Religion, the nurse of Philosophy, the harbinger of Beauty to all the nations of Asia. From her China and Japan[3] received their religion ; Persia and the East their Art inspiration. The greatness and fullness of the Art of Aryavarta affected life in all its aspects, exalting and beautifying, softening and sweetening, and yet driving it ever onwards, to seize the secrets of nature, the mystery of the Universe. She accomplished the true education of man through her artistic impulse drawing out his innate powers and faculties ; and through this cultivation of taste and inculcation of the ideals of true beauty, she sought to spiritualise the society of man, its institutions and conventions, its endeavours and achievements, so that man should find ever easier and nearer the Ultimate Reality hidden behind the illusion of matter ; and so fulfil better and fuller the purpose of his being, and realise the longings of his soul. This was particularly the purpose and mission of Ancient Indian Art. Of such Art, and such alone, we may conclude, joining with the poet who wrote,—

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[1] Coomaraswamy: *Art and Swadeshi*, p. 4.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[3] Okakura: *Ideals of East*—Intro. Whole book deals with this theme.

"When old age shall this generation waste
Thou shalt remain in the midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man to whom thou say'st,
Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty—that is all
Ye know on Earth, and all ye need to know."

(An Ode to a Grecian Urn)
JOHN KEATS



HINDOO ART IN ITS SOCIAL SETTING

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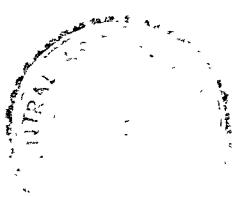
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